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RETURN TO KRONDOR

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Australian Cricket Captain
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FLY TO WIN!

- Air Combat Tactics
- Flight Sims Megaguide
- Falcon 4 - The Technology

• ALIEN vs. PREDATOR
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• KING'S QUEST 8

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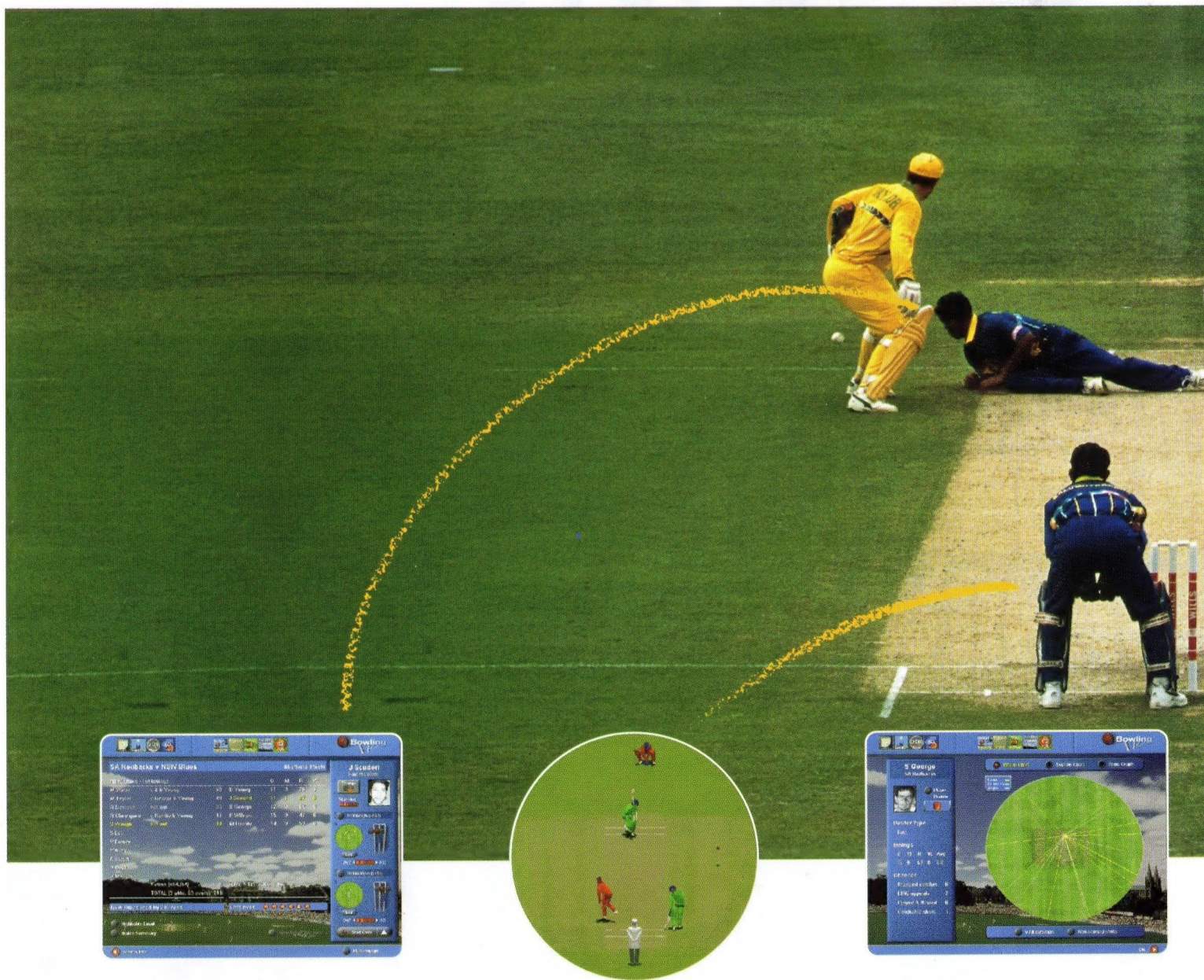
**MAG
OF THE
YEAR**

**next
gaming**



ISSUE 34 March 1999
\$8.95
NZ \$11.95 inc. GST

Australian cricket. Could

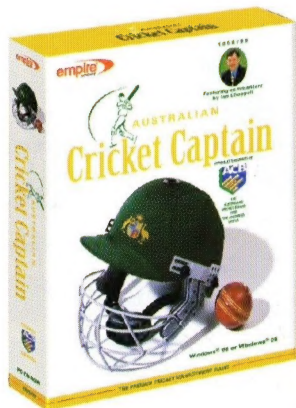


Keep track of the performance of your bowlers - are they taking those vital wickets or are they getting smashed all over the ground?

Watch the action unfold as it happens, either as edited highlights or if you so choose, ball by ball

Customise your field placing. What's your strategy - taking quick wickets or keeping the scoring rate down?

ACTUAL SCREEN SHOTS



Ever wondered what it feels like to manage a state cricket team? Think you could handle the pressure of a tour to the West Indies? **Australian Cricket Captain** from Empire Sport gives you the opportunity to prove it in the most comprehensive cricket management simulation ever available for the PC. With real match data including state championship teams, grounds and players, you control every element of cricket strategy, both on and off the pitch. Participating in every Sheffield Shield, Mercantile Cup or One day Internationals, you can even watch the action ball-by-ball as the drama unfolds in stunning real time animation. Endorsed by The Australian Cricket Board and with commentary from Channel 9's Ian Chappell, this is the definitive cricket management sim.



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www.metrogames.com.au

you manage any better?



Featuring commentary
by former
Australian Captain
and voice of Cricket
Ian Chappell



PHOTOGRAPH: PATRICK EAGAR

How do you measure up as a Captain? Are you leading your side to glory or are you languishing at the foot of the table? Here's where you'll find out.

Leg glances, square cuts, reverse sweeps, drives, pulls and hook shots - this will show you the batsman's weak shots as well as his favourites.

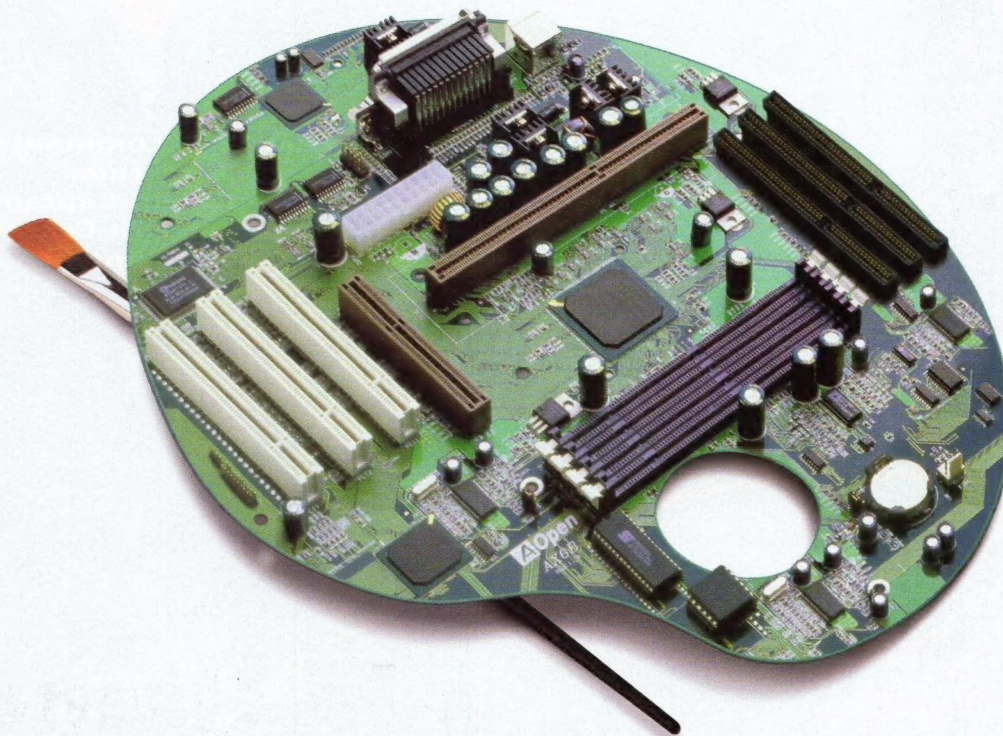
Check out your players' stats - are they performing to the best abilities? If not, maybe it's time to bring in some fresh faces.



AUSTRALIAN Cricket Captain

Available soon on PC CD-ROM

— THE PREMIER CRICKET MANAGEMENT GAME —



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"...it's a dream board for performance enthusiasts."

Editors Choice - apc mag - BX Motherboard test July '98



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What we're playing:
Fallout 2, Grand Prix Legends,
Railroad Tycoon II, Half-Life, Ehrgeiz

Violence in Games: The Aftermath



Well, I guess it must simply mean that either games aren't violent anymore. That, or that the moral crusaders of a year ago have come to terms with a dozen small red polygons lying around on a mip-mapped floor.

But no. We know (and thank the heavens) that games are just as meaty and gutsy as ever before, while the likelihood of the moral minority having a change of heart is up there with Richard Branson deciding he's had enough publicity for the moment.

Instead, what we have here is a case of the Cause Freaks simply having moved on, having tired of the Last Big Issue.

On the one hand, we gamers are grateful to be out of the Spotlight of Public Outrage, on the other, why the hell did we put up with all that crap - when the issue was only ever going to be a flash in the pan?

Really, we should simply ignore the turkeys and get on with the gaming, and really, I should keep my big mouth shut here and not draw attention to the issue again. But dammit - violence in games was the biggest issue ever to hit gaming, in terms of its perception among non-gamers; so, what was the point of it all?

How many future murderers were set straight thanks to the vigilance of the Office of Film and Literature Classification? How many fun loving

criminals were saved by parents that paid special attention to the classification sticker? How many well intentioned gamers were weaned off their hobby completely by over-protective parents all fired up by the gospel according to Alan Jones? About as many as actually understood the issue in the first place...

Carmageddon 2 was released recently. Compared to the comparatively tame depicted violence in the original, this was over the top. Did anyone care? Were there any newspaper reports? TV News stories? Outraged talkback radio hosts?

Leave us alone now, responsible moralists, we're OK and there's no damage done. They're just games...

Ben Mansill
Editor



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What's bothering Ben this month.

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Spin that disc, play those games, marvel at new technology.

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Thrustmaster come good with new gear, tricky virtual CD software, motherboards and lots more.

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Falcon 4.0: The Incredible Game 28

Major Ian looks at the breathtaking technology behind the Big One, plus tips and configuration advice.



FEATURE

History of Flight Sims 32

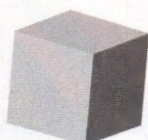
MiGMan's look at 10 Years of Flight Sims. What a decade! What an evolution!



FEATURE

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What's this '3D Acceleration' you guys talk about all the time? Do I need it? What's coming next?



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Deer Avenger 112

World Gone Mad, pt 278. Now you can play as a deer, hunting redneck humans... No, really.

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The Official Every Mod, Skin and Thing available on the net, but on CD.



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GAMEPLAY

Fly to Win 114

Survive a little longer in today's combat flight sims. Major Ian Lindgren is your Wing Leader. Listen up gentlemen!

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Use this guide to beat Activision's toughie. That's no sin.

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Tiny bits of fantastically useful information. Win again.

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Locked in his cupboard under the stairs, Oracle plays every game in the world just for you. He sure smells bad, but we love him anyway.

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Before there were games, there was Kings Quest.





CD GUIDE

Lock the door, turn out the light, and play

CD#34

Starting the PC PowerPlay CD

This month's cover CD is jam packed with the best demos around. To install simply insert the CD into your CD Drive and watch as the menu materialises before your very eyes (if it doesn't, you probably have autorun disabled so click on the RUNME.BAT file to begin). Using the CD is easy. Click on the category you want to look at, be it GAMES, UTILS or PATCHES. Select the program you want to run and it will either install onto your hard drive or run straight from the CD.

cdtech@powerplay.next.com.au

Faulty CDs will be replaced free of charge. Send it, together with a description of the error, to:

PC PowerPlay CD Returns

Reply Paid 634

78 Renwick St

Redfern

NSW 2016 (No postage required)



8 PC PowerPlay

Games

Aliens vs. Predator

Publisher: FOX Interactive

Genre : 1st Person Shooter

FOX Interactive's AvP combines elements from the films "Alien" and "Predator" for a hard core game of survival. In this demo you get to play as Predator, the ultimate hunter, armed with wrist blades, a shoulder cannon, and other savage energy and projectile weapons. You must descend through an Alien-infested Atmosphere Processor to eliminate the Marines who are defending an APC at the base of the structure.

The default keys are:

UPARROW Forward

DOWNARROW Backward

LEFTARROW Strafe Left

RIGHTARROW Strafe Right

NUMPAD 4 Turn Left

NUMPAD 6 Turn Right

RIGHT_ALT Strafe

A Look Up

Z Look Down

S Centre View

LEFTSHIFT Walk

RIGHTSHIFT Jump

SPACE Operate

I Toggle Cloaking

Q Next Weapon

W Previous Weapon

PAGEUP Zoom In

PAGEDOWN Zoom Out

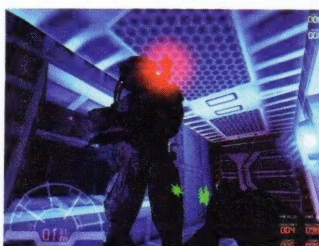
L Cycle Vision Modes

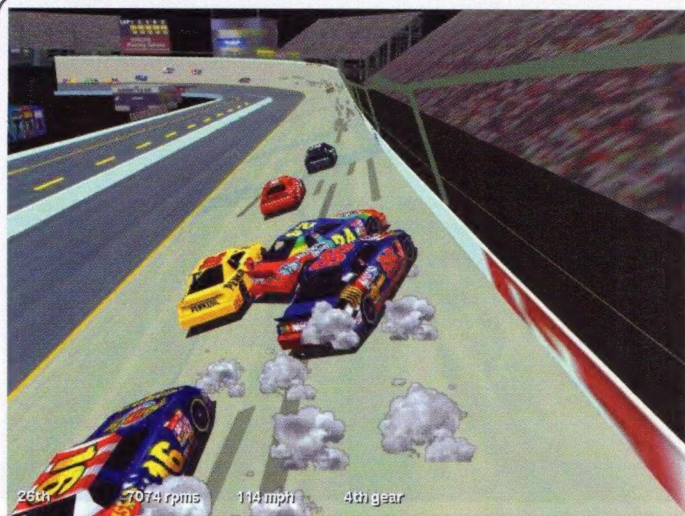
The default mouse settings are full MouseLook.

The default mouse buttons are fire primary for LMB and fire secondary for RMB.

Required: P200, 32 MB RAM, SVGA

Reccomended: P266, 64 MB RAM, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card





NASCAR Racing 1999

Sierra Sports

Simulations (Driving)

NASCAR Racing 1999 Edition, creates an authentic racing simulation for drivers of all ages. With the help of a spotter and crew chief, you can experience the excitement of driving on the tracks of the 1998 Winston, Grand National, and Craftsman Truck Series. Customize cars and trucks to achieve maximum speed, strategize to outsmart your opponents and race wide-open to take the checkered flag.

Required: P100, 32MB, SVGA

Recommended: P200, 64MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card



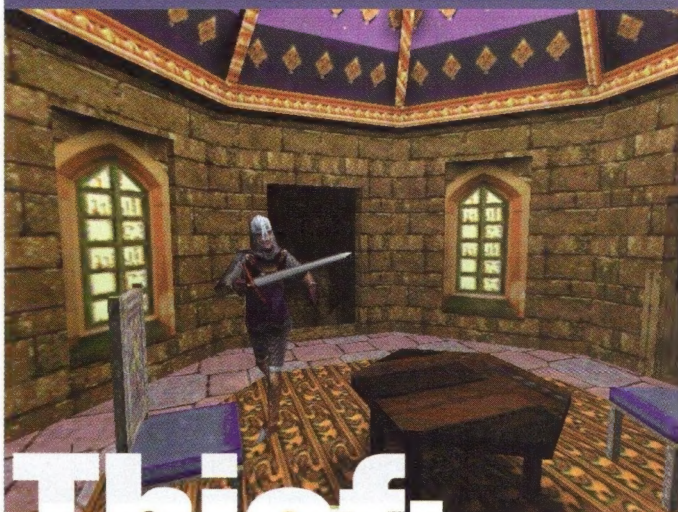
X Games: Pro Boarders

Electronic Arts Sports

Fancy yourself a proboarder? Try standing on top of a hill with your feet strapped into a polished board then flying down the mountain at rather ridiculous speeds, trying to perform tricks and stunts without breaking any of your virtual limbs. Easy, unless you're Sony Bono.

Required: P166, 32, SVGA

Recommended: P233, 64, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card



Thief: The Dark Project

Thief: The Dark Project

Eidos Interactive Adventure

Success requires more than firepower - use stealth and intellect to outwit your enemies. Unique weapons help you achieve your goals: Use your Blackjack to knockout unsuspecting opponents, a noise arrow to throw them off the trail, moss bombs to silence your footsteps in stone corridors, and if these don't keep you out of sight, it might be time to resort to more drastic measures, like a fire arrow, or your trusty sword.

Required: P200, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB

Recommended: P266, 64 MB, SVGA 4MB, 3D Card



Big Race USA

Publisher: Empire Interactive
Genre: Pinball Simulation
 Race your way across the USA in the fastest, most exciting, most intricate Pinball sim ever released for the PC. Experience incredible ball "spin & slide" dynamics, and real-time internet head-to-head play for the first time ever, Big Race USA delivers more adrenaline-pumping action than your brain can handle: challenge it if you dare!

Required: P90, 16MB, SVGA

Recommended: P133, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

Cybermerc

Publisher:

JC Research

Genre: RPG

As a mercenary, you have been invited (with the promise of great rewards) to aid the Governor General's troops in the destruction of an alien threat. Equipped with the latest high-tech weaponry, as well as being genetically and cybernetically



enhanced, you have become part of an elite group who will participate in a massive strike against the creatures. Good luck soldier, you'll need it...

Required: P166, 32MB, SVGA

Recommended: P233, 64MB, SVGA 2MB

Dark Vengeance

Publisher: GT Interactive

Genre: 1st Person Shooter

The Dark Elves are on a bloody quest for revenge against the people of Amagar...and only you can stop them. Your world is being held by a magical eclipse. Violence shadows the countryside in a dark revolt. Evil hordes, once banished to the underworld, are currently running amok. You learn the shocking history behind this drastic turn of events. Humans and elves had once lived together in peace, until many centuries ago when a renegade band of elves had challenged for power. Banished to underground caverns, they become known as the 'Dark Elves', and have been vowing revenge on the surface dwellers - a Dark Vengeance. A prophecy

foretold of their return and the history of the tale was forced down, but after countless peaceful centuries the people of the land became fearless and ignored the ancient tales. You are aware that you are living a part of this prophecy. Your challenge is to free your world from the clasp of the eclipse, beat the Dark Elf forces, and end the bloody carnage and destruction that plagues your homeland.

Required: P166, 16 MB, SVGA

Recommended: P200, 32 MB, SVGA 2 MB, 3D Card

Fatal Abyss

Publisher: SegaSoft

Genre: 3D Shooter

In the near future there is a war being fought over Bacteria 241, a strange new energy source found in its raw form at the bottom of the ocean. The scientists of Eco Systems organization have developed a way to extract the energy source from the Bacteria. But their plans to be the sole providers of the energy to the world are crushed by the invading and combative Proteus Tech. Now it is up to you to either play on the side of Eco Systems and



KING'S QUEST 8: Mask of Eternity

Publisher: Sierra

Genre: Adventure

Playing the role of Connor, you must gather strength and courage and set out on the ultimate quest: reseal the Mask of Eternity and restore law, light and order to your world. Only then can global order be restored! Journeying beyond Daventry, you will visit otherworldly realms filled with unimaginable characters, brain-twisting tests of courage and incredible challenges. But the spread of evil has created an extra challenge - dark creatures roaming free across the land are ready for a fight. It'll take perfect marksmanship and a sharp sword to keep these from ending your quest!

Required: P166, 32MB, SVGA

Recommended: P233, 64MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card



FIFA 99

Publisher: EA Sports

Genre: Sports - Soccer

FIFA is back - bigger and better than ever. The most successful and popular football game EVER returns after two World Cup licenced games. As you'd expect, FIFA 99 provides more teams, more ways to play and more excitement than any other game on the market. Get on the pitch and take YOUR team to glory.

Required: P133, 32 MB, SVGA

Required: P200, 64 MB, SVGA, 3D Card



Star Wars ROGUE SQUADRON

LucasArts

3D Shooter

In Rogue Squadron, your missions will take place during the time period between Star Wars: A New Hope and The Empire Strikes Back. Your superior officer, General Rieekan, will brief you on your mission objectives and advise you on tactics that will help you defeat your Imperial opposition. Wedge Antilles and other Rogue Squadron members will be your wingmen on your missions, which will range from rescue and reconnaissance to search-and-destroy and more. You'll take on the Empire in air-to-air dogfights and air-to-ground combat over the far-flung planets of the Star Wars universe. As you improve your skills, you'll be able to pilot more advanced craft, fire more powerful weapons, and fly more challenging missions. In this struggle between the forces of freedom and the forces of darkness, your skill and daring will make all the difference!

Required: P166, 32 MB, SVGA, 3D Card

Recommended: P233, 64 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card



REDGUARD

**Bethesda Software
Adventure**

You are Cyrus, a Redguard mercenary who left Hammerfell long ago to wander the borderlands of the Empire. You vowed never to return, and the reason why is a shame you still bear. Forget the troubles ahead- the Imperial guards, the dragons, the legions of undead- your biggest fear is facing Iszara again. For she, no doubt, has never forgiven you for killing her husband ten years before. Prepare for the adventure of a lifetime.

Required: P166, 32 MB, SVGA, 3D Card

Recommended: P200, 64 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card



help salvage their plans, or on the side of Proteus Tech to destroy and dominate. This demo is MULTIPLAYER ONLY and is intended for LAN play or for the HEAT.NET gaming network.

Required: P166, 32 MB, SVGA, 3D Card

Recommended: P200, 64 MB, SVGA, 3D Card

Asghan: The Dragon Slayer

Publisher: Grolier Interactive

Genre: Adventure

Set in a richly detailed 3D medieval fantasy environment. The player takes on the role of the main character Asghan and has to guide him through a multitude of traps, puzzles and deadly skirmishes against over many different kinds of enemy. The overall objective is to rid the land of dragons and avenge his father's death.

Required: P120, 16 MB RAM, SVGA

Recommended: P200, 32 MB RAM, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card

Killertank

Publisher: ElectroTech
Multimedia

Genre: 3D Shooter

KillerTank' plot takes player to post-industrial future. An ambitious physicist named Stephen Navotny dreams of world

supremacy. He is constructing a miracle machine which is able to create chaotic spatiotemporal transformations. The scientist ranges his one-time pal, with rather dark past, to drive super-tank and obtain the elements necessary to improve the Time machine. The Tankman must also destroy a network of important objects, and horrify the world.

Required: P233, 32 MB, SVGA, 3D Card

Recommend: P266, 64 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card

Ruthless.com

**Red Storm Entertainment
Strategy**

Tom Clancy's ruthless.com, the second game of the Power Plays series, is a bitter contest of economic growth and conquest set in the high-stakes world of modern corporate raiding. It combines the crushing grip of business expansion with the rapier strikes of deceit, dirty tricks, and outright crime.

Required: P166, 32 MB, SVGA
Recommended: P200, 64 MB, SVGA 2MB

Thunder Brigade

**Interactive Magic
3D Shooter**

You pilot a well-armed flying tank and join interplanetary warfare against two rival factions. In



this futuristic world, man has settled much of the known universe, but still can't live in peace. Three federations battle for control of a dozen spectacular planets - the ultimate fate of each rests in your trigger-finger.

Required: P133, 32 MB, SVGA
Recommended: P300, 64 MB, SVGA 2MB

Warzone 2100

Eidos Interactive Strategy

WARZONE 2100 is a real time action and strategy game set on Earth in the 21st Century. Upon entering the post-nuclear world of Warzone 2100 you land from

your transport and establish your base. Here you conduct research, design and manufacture vehicles, build new structures and prepare your plans of global conquest.

Required: P166, 16 MB, SVGA
Recommended: P200, 32 MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card

PATCHES

Return To Krondor

Heretic 2

KQ8

Falcon 4

Utilities

IMatch

IMatch is a completely new kind of image processing application! It allows you to index all the images on your hard disks and external storage media and to query the resulting image databases by image content! Scan your images for duplicates, even if resized, cropped or converted into another file format!

PopOff 32-bit 1.0

Do you hate it when web sites automatically open pop-up windows full of advertisements or other undesirable content when you arrive at or depart from a web site? PopOff is a small program that works with your browser to filter out these browser commands, thereby preventing extra windows from opening. PopOff runs automatically in the background, starting up when you start your web browser. Since PopOff only filters out commands for windows that are opened without user interaction, all other web page functionality remains intact while you browse.

3D Magic 32-bit 1.10

3D Magic is the coolest way to create stunning 3D logos and graphics for your web site or documents. 3D Magic's Logo Wizard allows you to choose

from 80 different 3D color textures for your 3D logo. 3D Magic is also the ONLY 3D program available that lets you BEND 3D text and create MULTIPLE lines of 3D text, all in one easy step. 3D Magic's custom Phong renderer combined with multiple colored lights, multiple rendering modes and high-level anti-aliasing, ensures high quality images found no where else. 3D Magic will also load, view and save 23 different 3D file formats. You can even use 3D Magic's auto-tracing to trace images in to 3D logos.

Pretty HTML 32-bit 2.0

Pretty HTML is the first full featured HTML source code styling tool. It will clean up all that messy HTML code, making it easier to read and edit. It indents, comments, structures your HTML code according to the rules you specify and can even compress the size of HTML files by removing extra spaces, tabs, line breaks and comments. Works in batch mode as well as in single file mode.

Kali 32-bit 1.59

Kali is the largest Internet gaming system in the world with over 100,000 users and 300

servers in 35 countries. "So what do Kali actually do? Simple: Kali makes your Internet connection appear to be an IPX connection to your game. This means that all those IPX games can now be played with a number of other users over the Internet.

Zilch Standard

Spending too much on computer games and hardware? Zilch Standard helps you get you out of debt fast by formulating a repayment plan that shortens your payoff time and saves you money in interest payments.

Back Orifice Killers

Antigen, Toilet Paper and BO Detect are a collection of programs that searches for and removes the Back Orifice backdoor trojan. It scans your machine every time you boot, insuring that the trojan, when installed, does as little damage as possible.

Dreamweaver 2.0

One of the best web design programs available. Lets you easily add FLASH and Shockwave files to your web pages too

Visual Calendar Planner

Visual Calendar Planner offers

an easy way to schedule appointments and display monthly or weekly calendars. You can also print color calendars, set your calendar as your Windows wallpaper, and more.

Battlefield Communicator Client

Battlefield Communicator is the first real-time voice communications package designed and optimized to work with multiplayer games. With the Battlefield Communicator Client users can host and connect to peer to peer sessions involving 2 players. Additionally clients can connect to voice conferences of up to 32 players hosted by the Battlefield Communicator Server.

Battlefield Communicator Server

The Battlefield Communicator Server acts as a host for up to 32 Battlefield Communicator users. It provides enhanced functionality, such as dividing a session into multiple channels. The user can switch between channels quickly using hotkeys, even from inside a game! The server can be run on the same machine as the client and a game; a dedicated server machine is not required.

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<http://www.t4c.com.au>

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200 Monsters * Spells

for Windows95/98/NT
32 bit - Direct X

Server located here in Australia
for fastest low lag play

AR INTERNET

A.R. providing online services since January 1994.

SIDELINES

One of the best ways to raise awareness of a new title in any particular series? Release an older classic in that series for nix. That's just what Maxis have done in preparation for SimCity 3000. Rather than being a straight version of the game distributed by ye olde faithful Internet, Maxis have created a new version of the title that requires an internet browser to play, calling it Sim City Classic Live. Go to www.simcity.com for more details.

Myth 2: Soulblighter was released to the public with quite a nasty little bug in the software (which includes the demo). Completely unintentional, the bug was not within the actual game code but in the uninstall program, which is commonly used to uninstall most software titles out there. Under certain circumstances, uninstalling Myth 2 using this program will result in permanent data loss. Bungie have recalled all units. If you own an affected copy though, Bungie recommend that you manually drag the Myth 2 game folder to the recycle bin to remove it from your system.

Microsoft have indulged in some mighty hand slapping throughout the US, after tracking pirated copies of their Win 95, Win NT and Office 97 software titles to various retailers and professional establishments. Microsoft, naturally, aren't happy and have filed suit against the alleged offenders. This is apparently just the beginning of mass strikes by Microsoft against software pirates...

Dear god, he really is watching us! News has just come to hand that George Orwell's 1984 is being made into a computer game by Media-X (www.big-brother.com). It looks to be an adventure game (what else could it be, really?), set just after the events in the book have taken place, though somewhat strangely the characters and events in the computer game do seem to be rather analogous. More soon.

Just how advanced and realistic are modern flight sims? Well, NBC recently used Jane's Fleet Command for the visual re-enactments of the Desert Fox raids on Iraq. Using the various maps and 3D object models (such as missiles, strike fighters, etc) used in Jane's Fleet Command, NBC were apparently very impressed with the results. Spokespeople denied that Jane's were currently developing a B2 Bomber simulation, or that they were considering a squad based tactical combat simulation entitled "Bring back Schumann, bring back good ole' Shoe". Dogs tails were said to be wagging with the news, however.

Quake3: Doing the MacArena

What the hell is happening to our nice, safe, comfortable world? It used to be so delineated - PCs were for gaming (for us, anyway), and Macs were way overpriced, archaic, and only useful for desktop publishing. Welcome to the modern day topsy turvy world, because Macs are changing. Macs are becoming cool. Macs are becoming faster than our PCs, and Macs are starting to get decent support for games. And we're not talking about those faux rediteller machines, the iMacs, either.

You're not just going to take our word for it? Fine, how about this then? Gaming demi-god John Carmack wants to demonstrate one of the most anticipated and controversial PC games of 1999: Quake 3: Arena. What does he do? Does he gather together an exclusive group of PC gamers and gaming press from across the world? No, he demonstrates - get this - the first working version of Q3:A that anyone has seen, anywhere at the MacWorld Expo in San Francisco! On a Mac! And the clip? Yep, it was from Q3:A running on a Mac as well! We're through the looking glass here, people. Confused? Scared shirtless yet? You 'aint seen nothing yet. Read on...

New model G3s leave Wintel quaking in fear

It was, all told, a quite eventful MacWorld this year. Along with the arrival of Carmack and co, the new model G3s (Apple's flagship Macintosh machines) were also released, and they look great too. Apple has finally taken heed of what almost everyone has been saying for years - beige is crap -



ports, an ADP (Apple Desktop Port), a built in 10/100BASE-T ethernet connector, ATI's RAGE 128 video card with a minimum of 16MB RAM, and options for a 56k modem, this is one impressive system. The price is still going to be quite high, but not that much more than a comparable system. Papa likes!

It's all just a game

Pat of the reason we're all quite excited about these new Mac innovations is because part of the

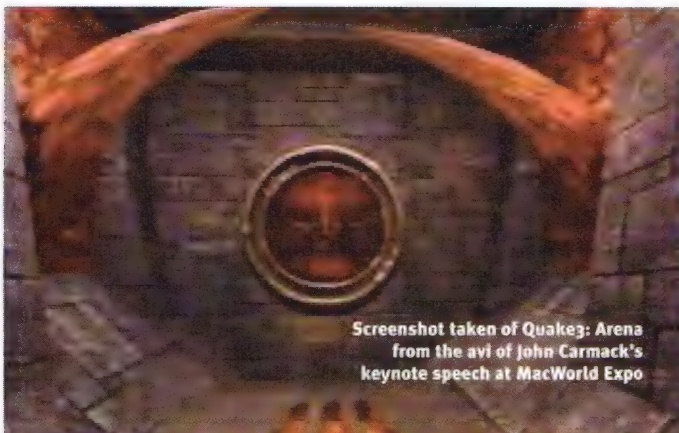
emphasis behind Mac's

push into Wintel territory is for the gamers market, and they've managed to secure some impressive support. Along with a simultaneous release of Q3:A on both Mac and PC, there's a very impressive array of games slated for MacRelease in the near future, including:

Quake 2, Starcraft, BattleZone, Heretic 2, SiN, Zork: Grand Inquisitor, Myth 2, Sim City 3000, Railroad Tycoon 2, Fly!, Dark Vengeance, Interstate '76, Jazz Jackrabbit 2, Falcon 4.0, Klingon Honor Guard, Age Of Empires, Creatures 2, Imperialism 2, Rainbow 6, Quest For Glory 5

and designed cases that are both functional and look good, and most importantly aren't boring crap beige. Not only that, but what's inside the machines is enough to make the greediest power user happy. Sporting a processor ranging from 300-400MHz, up to 1MB of backside cache running at between 150-200MHz, a system bus of 100MHz, 64MB RAM by default (up to 1GB maximum), a 6 - 12GB HDD (ATA or SCSI), CD/DVD drive, two firewire ports, 2 USB





Screenshot taken of Quake3: Arena from the avi of John Carmack's keynote speech at MacWorld Expo

OpenGL - think different

How are these games going to look on Macs, no matter how fast the processor is? 3D accelerator cards have been available for Macs in the past (they have PCI slots, just like PCs), but a lack of API support has kept them a bit behind. Apple's Steve Jobs is making all the right moves though, revealing that Apple and Silicon Graphics had signed a deal for a version of OpenGL to come to the Macintosh platform this year (in fact, it should be released by the time you read this). OpenGL is one of the most widely accepted APIs for games, particularly in the enormously popular first person shooter category, and this is fantastic news for Mac Gamers.

PlayMacStation

Emulators for old computers and arcade machines have long been widely available for a plethora of modern day platforms - there are emulators available for C64's, Atari's, arcade machines, and more. Connectix have been around for a while making emulation software for the Macintosh, most notably their PC Emulation software (Virtual PC), but their latest product came as somewhat of a shock. Again, at the eventful MacWorld Expo, Connectix announced and released their PlayStation emulator for Macintosh, which essentially



turns any G3 Mac into a PlayStation. The legalities of such a product are still a bit obscure, and at the time of going to press Sony were yet to comment on the product. Many industry sources were quite confident that Sony wouldn't be suing, however, because Sony make most of their money from selling the games rather than the console systems, and PSX Emulator users would still have to purchase the CDs to play the games. The emulator, named the "Virtual Game Station", is at present locked so it will only play NTSC PSX games (the American type), and not pirate copies of disks, or games designed for other regions (like Australia, which uses PAL). However, within days of the announcement, reports were surfacing that not only was a pirated version of the emulator software available, but also programs to break the regional locking, making the emulation system capable of playing disks designed for PAL systems - as well as pirated copies of games.

Sony monitors price drop

Sony make some great audio and visual gear, of which their monitor range is of the same glorious standard. We like em so much that the PC PowerPlay Super Computer uses one. Well good news! The ever sexy and drool worthy Sony monitor range has just come down in price.

CPD100ES Mid Range 15" \$590 (RRP ex. tax)
 CPD200ES Mid Range 17" \$990 (RRP ex. tax)
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 GDM400PS Professional 19" \$2090 (RRP ex. tax)
 GDM500PS Professional 21" \$3190 (RRP ex. tax)



Go forth and bask in the glory of a high quality monitor!

Swatch dances to the beat of a different time

Time has been an ever so handy tool with which to keep important dates, get things done, and generally keep our head around things. With the advent of the Internet however, conventional units of time have become a less respectable way with which to coordinate inter-time zone activities. 3pm Sydney time is after all, 8pm LA time. We can still manage to organise a multiplayer game with players all over the world at a specific time and place, but isn't there an easier way?

So Swatch and Nicholas Negroponte (founder and director of the Media Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) have devised a way to standardise time all over the world, with the target beneficiaries of the technology being Internet users and trans-global jet setters.

This new "Internet Time" has been named Biel Mean Time (BMT), after the birthplace of Swatch - Biel, Switzerland. It works by dividing the day into 1000 "beats", at which midnight BMT is @000 Swatch Beats (the notation for beats) and midday BMT is @500 Swatch Beats. So at @208 Swatch Beats, the local time is 3pm Sydney time, 8pm LA time the day before, and 9:30am Calcutta time.

The idea is to be able to tell someone "Hey! Let's meet at 387 Swatch Beats!" with both (or more) parties knowing exactly what time that is. Swatch Beats may die the "gimmick" death, or it may be accepted by the masses as a new time standard. Either way, you've got a way of showing up all your internet friends.

Of course, you'll only be able to read BMT if you visit the Swatch web page at www.swatch.com or purchase one of their new range of .beat watches. Each .beat watch features local time and BMT time.



The time, it is a changin'

SIDELINES

Distribution giants GT Interactive have acquired Legend Entertainment for an undisclosed amount. Legend Entertainment, who are currently developing the Unreal level pack, Wheel of Time (based on Robert Jordan's books, using the Unreal engine), and Unreal 2, join Cavedog Entertainment, Humungous Entertainment, Single Trac, Oddworld Inhabitants, Bootprint Entertainment and Reflections as part of the GT family. The move allows Legend to concentrate on the creative aspect of game development, with GT taking care of the rest. As a result, we can expect a simultaneous launch of Unreal 2 around the world later in the year.

Staying with the Unreal and Epic Megagames, more news has been released on the up and coming Unreal: Tournament. An answer to Quake 3: Arena, UT is primarily geared to be a single player game, with all the action taking place against bots. Multiplay will also be included, though it will be second to single player. Curiouser and curiouiser. New weapons and a plenty of new game-play styles will also be featured. Look for a preview soon.

Westwood have posted some Dune 2000 goodies at www.westwood.com. The pack includes 10 new multiplayer maps, 2 new terrain tile sets, expanded (and purely cosmetic) terrain features (extra bridges, Freemen statues, and a deserted village), and 3 new units - one for each of the forces in Dune 2000. The new units include the grenadier - an Atreides anti-infantry unit, the Sardaukar - elite Harkonnen infantry, and the Stealth Raider - an Ordos scouting weapon. Logging on to Westwood Online with Dune 2000 will automatically update your copy, or the pack can be downloaded from the web page separately.

A new mission editor for Microsoft's Combat Flight Simulator can be downloaded from www.microsoft.com/games/combatfs/downloads.htm. Using MS Excel, players enter mission data in the appropriate cells, then execute a macro to create the usable file. This editor is not supported by Microsoft technical support, however.

SIDELINES

Is it that time again already? Happily enough, yes - id software are planning to release a public test version of Quake 3 Arena sometime late March/early April. And judging by how Q3A looked on a goddam Macintosh earlier this year when Master Carmack showed a demo to the Mac faithful, it's going to be yet another top quality release. Keep checking www.idsoftware.com for more details.

Mitsubishi Electronics have announced the world's first audio headphone set to feature a 3D sound processor chip. Designed primarily to handle the delicate straight-to-ear acoustics of 3D sound, the chip will also enhance the quality of "two dimensional" sound delivered.

Love it or loathe it, Plug'n'Play did make the installation of new PC hardware a little less daunting. Microsoft, ever the opportunists, have proposed to take PnP a step further by announcing the Universal Plug and Play Initiative. The idea behind UPnP, is to provide a stable networking system that allows the integration of all manners of computer hardware, with an eye on home appliances, of all things. With advanced household appliances featuring processors slowly becoming commonplace, a collective interface has been lacking. With this platform, Microsoft have proposed a standard by which all things UPnP can be controlled from a central location, namely the PC. Microsoft and UPnP already have the support of over 27 of the computer industries major players. More news on this one as it develops.

For all those waiting with baited breath (yeah right) on the name of the next generation of Intel mass market processors, relax. The chip formerly known as the Katmai, has now been renamed the Pentium 3 by Intel. The 450MHz and 500MHz models should be out now, with the P3 600MHz chip due out towards the end of the year. And here we thought Intel would choose a more original name for its flagship property to lead it into the next millennium.

EverQuest, the next big thing in Online RPGs, is almost ready for public release, or Sony claims. March 16th is US release date. Before that can happen though, Phase 4 of beta testing has yet to occur - which is set for mid-February and planned to last at least two weeks. Although phase 4 isn't meant to delay the release date, stranger things have happened. We'll bring news of a local release date as soon as we know more.

NewsWire
US

Don St. John

Here in the States, the whole game industry naturally assumes that everything that matters takes place in a couple of locations. Silicon Valley, of course - that's where most of the companies (and good parties) are. Austin/Dallas, where the Texas mafia constantly thinks up new ways to frag, and the Northwest, where it rains so much that there's nothing to do but stay in and develop software.

But never the East Coast...or so they say. Well, this East Coaster is most intrigued by some of the doings at a couple of New York-based companies. Surprisingly, one is Acclaim, which may own the hearts of many a console player, but has been known for years as a dog when it comes to making PC games. They couldn't even get the ports right: Turok got a fast reputation for inducing nausea (literally) even among 3D veterans. But last year they popped up with Forsaken, which got a fast and well-deserved following. A sign of things to come?

Maybe so. Shortly, they'll be coming out with a golden opportunity to finally cement a place among decent PC publishers with South Park, the game version of the manic, foul-mouthed cartoon beloved by game geeks the world over. Technically, this is a port too—the N64 version hit shelves a few months ahead of this—but can you watch The Spirit of Christmas on a Nintendo? South Park was in many ways a PC-driven phenomenon, and it's fitting that this is a first-person shooter (based on the engine for Turok 2). The little foul-mouthed bastards are in actual 3D, blowing away insane turkeys, aliens and anything else that gets in their way. I can't wait, I bet you can't either.

Meanwhile, word is that GT Interactive is on the verge of picking up Legend Entertainment, the developer that's currently doing the much-anticipated The Wheel Of Time and is ramping up on the next two (count 'em) versions of Unreal. Unlike lots of these types of corporate-level stories,

this one is promising at the gaming level - Legend already does hellacious work, and now they'll have a big pot of money to throw at their upcoming titles. It's like education: The more you spend, the better your results are, IF you're working at any sort of decent level to begin with. Come to think of it, Legend is an eastern US company too. So, when California drops into the ocean, we won't have anything to worry about....



The N64 version of South Park had a huge list of characters and great sound. Hopefully the PC version will be even better

Mega Christmas Gaming Pack

Well, the turkey has been disposed of, the choccy all eaten, the presents opened, the tree has withered away to a smelly brown husk, and you're thinking that Christmas is over - but not if you're one of these lucky 53 people, it isn't. And especially not if you're Mr Maddox from Oakleigh, cos he'll be taking home a Compaq Presario 5170, a Panasonic 51cm TV, a Nintendo 64, a game pack from Activision, and a free year's access to Telstra Big Pond. You lucky bastard, you. 2nd prize was a 51cm Panasonic TV, a Sony Playstation, a GT Interactive game pack, and Big Pond access for a year, and third was a pack of games from Virgin as well as a year free with Big Pond. And then there's still the 50 Runners up, who each get a free month with Big Pond. Congrats all!

First Prize (N64)

J Maddox Oakleigh VIC

Second Prize (Sony)

B Owen Oatley NSW

Third Prize

S Cargush Calwell ACT

Consolation Prizes

T Choikee, Tully, QLD

A Tiptak, Albans, VIC

G Leadabrand, Cottesloe, WA

W Mills, Berkeley, NSW

T Bishop, Zeehan, TAS

A Little, Castle Hill, NSW

P Sampson, Monbulk, VIC

P Buckley, Primbee, NSW

D Farr, Pt Augusta, SA

G Lam, Oatlands, NSW

J Starr, Forster, NSW

J McCluskey, Cannington, WA

G.L. Harvey, Burnie, TAS

B Forster, Noble Park, VIC

J Rogers, Murchison, VIC

E Dyne, Melba, ACT

D Ryan, Elliminyt, VIC

M L Wojtkowiak, Campbelltown, SA

D Jackson, Clematis, VIC

P Kow, Bonnyrigg, NSW

K Evans, Gunnedah, NSW

M Towers, Lismore, NSW

M Knights, St. Leonards, TAS

M Packer, Rokeby, TAS

T Hodges, Hillwood, TAS

A Rollison, Bega, NSW

C Rivett, Queanbeyan, ACT

P Kelly, Nowra, NSW

S Nash, Amaroo, ACT

B Lamb, Kellyville, NSW

A Tout, Forbes, ACT

S Fleming, Goulburn, NSW

I. Hunter, Dunlop, ACT

R Coombe, Holt, ACT

R.J. Pryor, Nemingha, NSW

A Grieco, Tweed Heads, NSW

J W Bear, Dharruk, NSW

B Little, Ballarat, VIC

M Webster, Banks, ACT

S Woods, Hawker, ACT

A Wilson, Monash, ACT

A Castle, Austinmer, NSW

M Macnamara, Kybong, QLD

J Hughes, West Mackay, QLD

S Althaus, Sth Mission Beach, QLD

A Edwards, Traralgon, VIC

P Menzel, Mt Isa, QLD

H Smith, Howard, QLD

J Sullivan, Undera, VIC

P Ramsay, West End, QLD

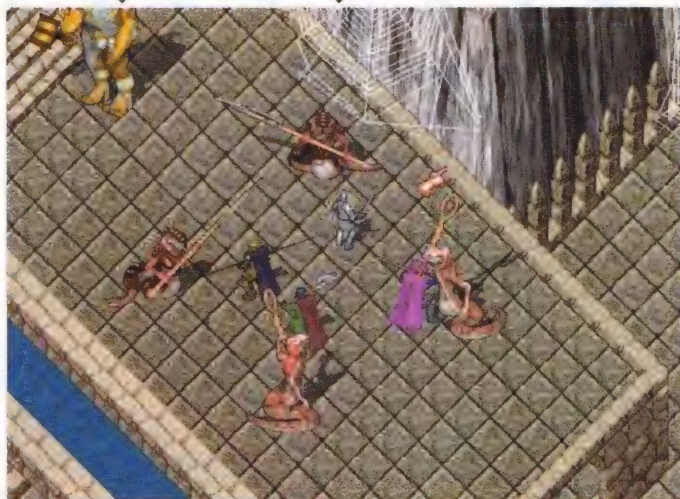
UO vs the (REAL) World

It wasn't as gripping as the OJ Case, nor as titillating as the US Presidential Play Ground Investigational Proceedings (featuring Monika Lewinski™), but the case of the disgruntled Ultima Online subscribers versus the people behind UO - ORIGIN Systems and their parent company Electronic Arts attracted just as much attention within the gaming industry.

It was the first lawsuit filed against a game developer for allegedly failing to deliver that which was promised to the consumer, as well as releasing incomplete and buggy software. After eight months of proceedings, the Superior Court of San Diego, found that the lawsuit filed against ORIGIN/EA couldn't be recognized as a Class Action and was thus thrown out of court. Under a mutual settlement, both parties would pay their own legal costs that were incurred during the lengthy hearing. Part of the settlement included the donation of \$15,000 to the San Diego Tech Museum of Innovation by EA. No damages were awarded.

EA were quick to declare the decision a victory on their part and promptly released the following statement.

"This lawsuit, which was filed by avid players of the game who continued to play extensively despite their complaints, was in our view without merit from the beginning,



and served no purpose other than to distract Electronic Arts and ORIGIN from their business of making entertainment software," states David Swofford of ORIGIN systems in an official release. "Notwithstanding the self-aggrandizing of the plaintiffs' counsel, the suit's only practical consequence was to hurt the very people he claimed to be helping by diverting time and resources from game development and support. Today's news is a victory for those of us interested in getting on with the business of developing innovative and revolutionary games."

Head plaintiff and attorney of the case, George Schultz, was quick to respond. "To me they [ORIGIN] just demean themselves. They learned nothing from this? We can always teach

them again," said Schultz. "I'm going to let the gamers decide if we are better off". Schultz went further to imply that one positive result of the case can be seen in UO The Second Age, which features patches, a manual, and displays better value.

The case has focused plenty of public and corporate scrutiny on the way game developers release their products. General public opinion suggests that the case was not a waste of time, which isn't surprising considering that more and more titles seem to be rushed out these days.

Although the case found no standing in a court of law, the implications are far reaching. The saga definitely ain't over yet.

Hexen, Heretic source code released

Taking a leaf from id's book, Raven software have recently released the source code to box Hexen and Heretic. While neither game carries the same kind of following as the Quake

series (though, realistically, nothing else does either), both games still retain a generous level of popularity, with quite a few fan sites still up on the web. Both games were DOS based,

and made use of the Doom engine, which has seen a resurgence of popularity of late with the release of the Doom code as freeware from id.

Raven are thinking that gamers will

now be free to create Mods, TCs, and to port the games to many other operating systems;

"It is our hope that people will create such modifications as GL Heretic and GL Hexen and support higher resolutions, greater multiplayer capabilities, and mods, and ports to new operating systems like BeOS and Linux" said Brian Raffel, VP of Raven Software. He went on to suggest that interested people head to Doomworld (www.doomworld.com) for more information on how to manipulate the Doom source code, after downloading the 1MB source code for the games from www2.ravensoft.com/source



SIDELINES

The man that is the epitome of dedication and "getting it right" (along with quite possibly being the most tenacious person in the world), Derek Smart is almost ready to release the latest patch for his pride and joy, Battle Cruiser 3000AD. Hot on the heels of V2.0 which saw a retail launch last December, Version 2.02 adds new features and sorts out more compatibility issues. Although the patch itself is free at the BC3K web site, Derek is considering the release of a laminated map and a new printed manual for the game, which can be bought for a small fee. Have we heard the last of Derek Smart and BC3K in the same breath? We think not...

Concurrent Controls have announced V4.0 of their Applica system, which allows multiple users to run full motion 3D multimedia applications on the same PC, all at the same time. Basically a network package, the Applica Multimedia System consists of a PCI multiple display adaptor card (for the host PC), the Applica station (to which you connect an external monitor, speakers, keyboard and other input devices - sold separately), a connector cable and the Applica Multimedia software, all for around \$500. The system allows for up to five Applica systems to run from the PC, with no apparent loss in system performance. The system is aimed at family PC users where one PC just isn't enough, and find that a second PC purchase is out of the question. The system also allows for multiple users to access the internet using the same modem. We've yet to be convinced on the resource sharing functions of the system, so we'll have a full review if and when we see a release of it on our shores.

S3 have been fairly quiet of late. Four or five years back they were one of the major players in the video card market, but a lack of cutting edge products have seen them fall by the wayside. They were, unsurprisingly, rather chuffed recently when they announced that a deal had been inked with Fujitsu for S3's Savage 3D card to be included in Fujitsu machines. We don't tend to see many Fujitsu machines on sale here in Australia, but worldwide they are the 7th largest supplier of PC's (according to Fujitsu, anyway), so it is a bit of good news for S3. If the reports of the Savage 3D's excellent performance are accurate then they might be on the comeback trail.

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THRUSTMASTER ACCESSORY SHOWCASE

Thrustmaster have been low key of late, with new peripheral releases being far and few between. Then one quiet day in January, we get a huge box packed with "Oh bugger we just missed the Xmas rush" Thrustmaster goodies. With one unfortunate exception, all of the products have been of typical Thrustmaster quality.

However, due to some unresolved issues in regards to pricing, the

RRP for these toys was unavailable at time of press. Thus, we couldn't discuss the value of these products. Our advice, as always, is to give any peripheral a test drive before you purchase. By the time you read this though, these Thrustmaster tools of joy should be widely available from your local retailer. If you'd like to make further enquiries, call Metro Games on (03) 9329 2999.

TOP GUN USB

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The Top Gun USB model is exactly the same Top Gun joystick from Thrustmaster with but two exceptions - the connector is made for use with a Universal Serial Bus (USB) port, and features a snazzy little USB logo on the base of the joystick itself.

So yes, if you walk into a games store and spy this "newer" version of the Top Gun, know that it's the exact same stick with a different connector. Nothing else.

If you're buying for the first time and have USB capabilities, go for it - this is still one of the best sticks on the market, for its price range. If you already own the Top Gun,

we recommend you purchase a USB adaptor instead. Cheap and available from most retailers, the adaptor is perfect for any game port to USB port upgrade for any existing joystick.



The good ole Thrusty Top Gun is back, with a new USB interface



FRAGMASTER

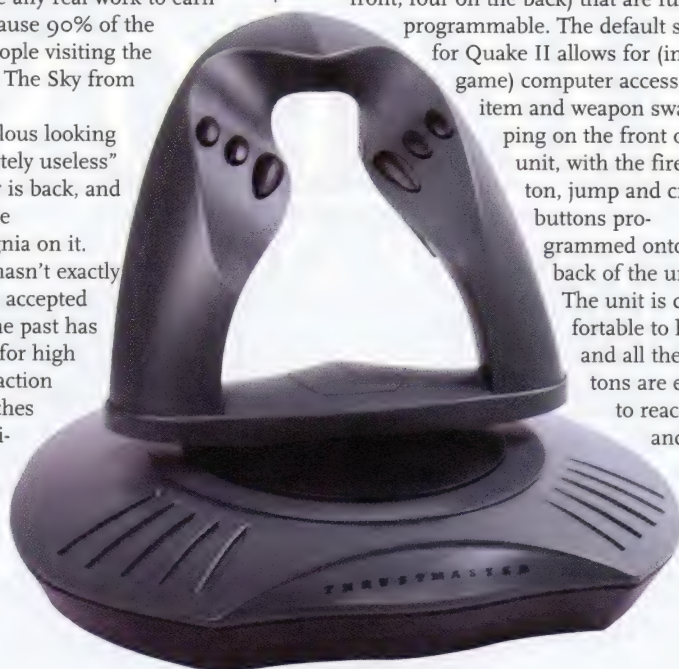
METRO GAMES PH: (03) 9329 2999

If looks could kill, the Frag Master may well indeed inflict instant death on your enemy at the blink of an eye. Not because you hold in your hands a controlling device too advanced to require any real work to earn your frags, but because 90% of the time you'll have people visiting the Great DM Level In The Sky from too much laughter.

Yep, the "ridiculous looking and almost-completely useless" 3D game controller is back, and this time it's got the Thrustmaster insignia on it. The 3D controller hasn't exactly taken off, nor been accepted by the masses in the past has it? This is because for high paced first person action fests, nothing matches the speed and precision of the mouse. Yet developers persist in providing us with near-useless toys to mess around with. One

question - why?

That's not to say that the device is a complete mess. The design of the Frag Master is fun, and features ten buttons (six on the front, four on the back) that are fully programmable. The default setup for Quake II allows for (in game) computer access, item and weapon swapping on the front of the unit, with the fire button, jump and crouch buttons programmed onto the back of the unit. The unit is comfortable to hold, and all the buttons are easy to reach and



painlessly used. There are two modes available, being standard mode and MegaHurts mode. The first delegates standard 4-axis control like normal joysticks, while Megahurts mode gives you the 3D control.

As predicted, the Frag Master was a complete let down. Control was less than precise and rather jerky. At times, looking down was somehow disabled, and only a 45 degree angle was allowed when looking up. We're hoping that these problems are the result of some sloppy drivers, which will be fixed in the near future.

The Frag Master redeems itself slightly with less pace-intensive games. Games like Descent and Forsaken work well with the FM, as do other space and flight sim games.

The actual design of the Frag Master is the sole reason this unit is going to walk out of store. It looks quite impressive, in a Klingon/Geiger kind of way. Which is perfect for those wanting an aesthetically pleasing joystick at your PC. Just don't expect it to make you a master in first person gaming. The unit's name isn't exactly misleading either. Using it will increase the frag count. In this case though, against you.

FUSION GAMEPAD

METRO GAMES PH: (03) 9329 2999

The Thrustmaster Fusion is the cheapie version of the Rage 3D, which graced our gaming stores just over a year ago. Based loosely on the Sega Saturn and Dreamcast control pads, the Rage 3D's, most notable feature was the comfortable and ultra-pleasing 'floating orb' directional thumb pad. Apart from that and a digital/analogue switch, the Rage 3D was a viable alternative to the almost competition free control pad market (which has been quite clearly dominated by the Microsoft Sidewinder pad). Viable because it wasn't any major offence to hold in the hand or use, and the buttons worked when pressed (which is more than can be said about other control pads out there).

The Fusion is quite basically a scaled down version of the Rage 3D. The main differences? A slightly different body shape, a more modern colour scheme (boring black is out, people) two less action buttons and a lack of analogue support. For the features freaks, the Fusion uses:

- *RISC Processor
- *8 way directional pad (on face of pad)
- *8 short throw buttons (on face of pad)
- *2 quick action triggers (underneath the pad)
- * 2 metre long cable

Dumping the 3D support has allowed the Fusion to be produced at a cheaper cost, and thus be sold for a more agreeable price. This move was a wise one on Thrustmaster's part, as there aren't many games for the PC that support analogue controls. Those games that do (mostly flight sims) were more practically (and enjoyably) played with a joystick. As a result, the analogue mode was rarely used. The one thing that we love to do the LEAST is to pay for something we're not using.

Coupled with the joypad is a USB adaptor (if your computer uses USB), and a demo



It may look unweildy and uncomfortable to hold, but it's really quite pleasant. Still looks silly though...

version of Tomb Raider II The Fusion is good value if console style control is what you crave. Just make sure that the flouro-green, candy blue and black colour scheme agrees with you.

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RACING WHEELS

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There was once a time when there was no real choice when it came down to racing wheels. Not because there was one clear almighty wheel that completely shat on every other wheel on the market thus making it a must have, but because there was simply nothing else on the market to have. If there was a wheel on the market, you bought it.

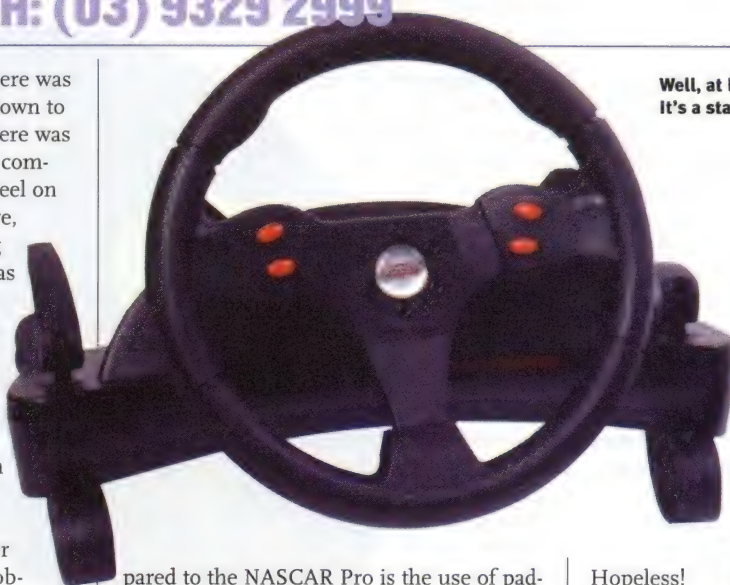
Today, thankfully, there is a much wider range and choice when it comes to giving a much more realistic and (exponentially) enjoyable experience. The monopoly is gone, resulting in some healthy competition and of course, a wheel for most occasions and differing budgets.

Perennial favourites Thrustmaster are back, addressing some of the problems presented with their last minor abomination - the Nascar Pro racing wheel. This wheel was missing any substantial tension and lacked some structural robustness (which resulted in that annoying wobble). As a result, the wheel's durability suffered. Considering the rigours of racing, durability is perhaps the most important aspect of the three. After that on the wish list is serious structural integrity (that is, being built like a brick), and last but not at all least, sheer style.

With the NASCAR Super Sport and the Formula Sprint, Thrustmaster have produced wheels that finally treat these three aspects as necessities, not simply as bonuses, however, as we shall see, Thrustmaster still get a bit sloppy at the basics.

The NASCAR Super Sport

The NASCAR Super Sport wheel is the successor to the NASCAR pro. The most noticeable feature of the Super Sport wheel com-



Well, at least it looks pretty good. It's a start...

pared to the NASCAR Pro is the use of paddle gear shifts instead of a cumbersome gear stick. While not necessarily authentic to the NASCAR racing experience, which racing enthusiast limits themselves only to one style of racing anyway? And the paddle shifters rock in a mighty way, allowing for both hands to be kept on the wheel at all times. The two paddle shifters are each on different springs. The presence of these also allow for a smaller base unit (which is already impressively small).

Very much unfortunately, though, is that the software has no option to adjust the 'deadzone', which you will soon discover is very much essential because at hands-off, dead centered, this wheel still somehow sends signals, meaning your car will NEVER track true unless you're actively feeding it corrections. This is indicative of very low build quality and cheap potentiometers.

Furthermore, Thrustmaster's new style of clamps are flimsy plastic and we broke it in half on our first attempt! Stealing the unit Hyper mag was sent, we fastened it very carefully, then observed how it still slid around the desk!

The pedals are still great, it's just the main components that require a bit of work...



Hopeless! Compared to the similarly priced Logitech Formula, this is a bad, cheap toy.

Formula Sprint

The Formula Sprint wheel is an attempt at recreating the F1 experience in a wheel. This is especially evident in the foot pedal set up. The actual unit is tiny (compared to the NASCAR pedal rig). The pedal overlap (the distance a depressed pedal makes over the base unit) is actually negative. However (heh, why must there be in 90% of cases, a catch?), to achieve a comfortable position where foot cramping is at an absolute minimum, the arch of the foot has to be used. If you try using the ball of your foot, discomfort and strain is almost guaranteed. This unfortunately overshadows any other display of thoughtful design of the pedal unit.

Other than that, Formula Sprint is almost identical to the NASCAR Super Sport, bar of course a few minor aesthetic variations. The most notable being the use of two clamps on either side of the unit (and under it) as opposed to central clamp located on the

underside of the Super Sport. Though the quality of the plastic used will more often than not result in pieces breaking off.

Both units get the thumbs down in terms of functionality.

We can't comment of the value of these though, as local distributors Metro Games are still sorting out the pricing of the units.



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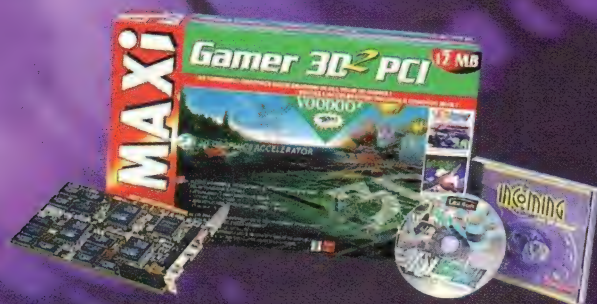
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ABit BHS Motherboard

RRP: \$255



Specifications:

Form Factor ATX

Board Size 305mm x 190mm

System Bus Speeds 66, 68.5, 75, 83.3, 100, 103, 112, 124, 133MHz

Clock multiplier Settings 2.0x - 5.5x

System memory ECC SDRAM 3.3V - 3 DIMM Slots

Total System Memory Supported 384MB

Chipset Intel 82443BX

Expansion Slots 2 x ISA, 5 x PCI, 1 x AGP

Serial Ports 2

Parallel Ports 1

Other Ports USB, PS/2 Mouse, IrDA

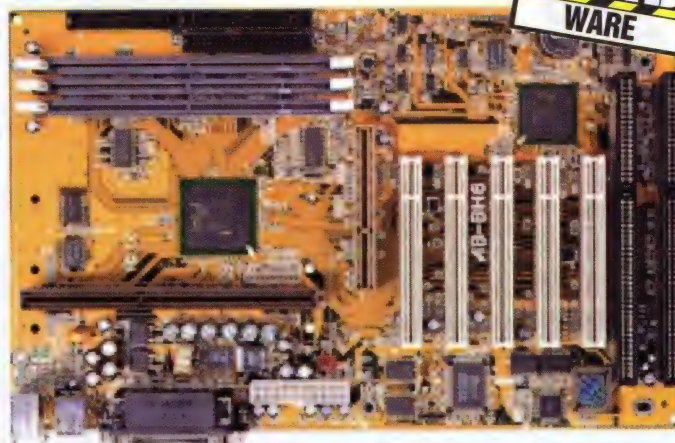
IDE Interface Dual channel IDE Ultra DMA/33

BIOS AWARD

Other Features wake on LAN, SB-LINK header, Over current protection, CPU thermal protection, Fan monitoring, System Voltage monitoring, CPU SOFTMENU II

Supplier Integral Computers

133MHz settings, it also supports a Bus speed of 124MHz. So if you can't quite get that processor to run at 133MHz Bus speed you can try 124. This board is fantastic for Celeron A overclockers. For example I was able to take a Celeron 333A up to an astounding 496MHz! Now, the voltage did need to be increased to 2.3V from the normal 2.0V, and as such needed some extra cooling. These tweaks are all easily initiated through the ultra cool CPU SOFT MENU II BIOS setup program. All changes from Bus speed and clock multiplier settings can be changed in the BIOS. By my reckoning this motherboard should be the perfect match for Intel's soon to be released Katmai processor (we'll get more info on the Katmai as soon as we can). This motherboard should even be able to support the 133Mhz version of Katmai too. Those of you that are looking for a new motherboard would have to put the BH6 right at the top of your list. Abit have out-



Safe and friendly family computing - this is the antithesis...

done themselves this time - this certainly is the motherboard have if tweaking your PC means anything to you.

Mainboard design 93

Speed 90

Features 94

Overclockability 99

Overall 94

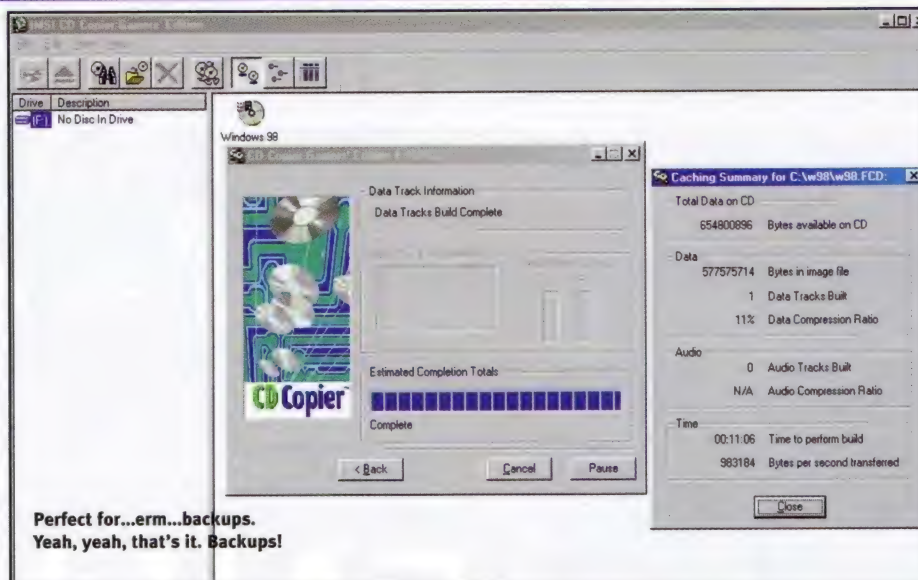
This motherboard rocks! If you want the most tweakable motherboard on the planet then this is the one for you, bar none. The BH6 will allow any overclocker to attain new heights in overclockability. Not only does it allow for the usual 100, 112,

CD COPIER Gamer's Edition

RRP: \$TBA

How often, as a completely dedicated gamer, do you pass by the utilities section at your computer store? All of the time, most of the time? It's very easy to do, for very obvious reasons. However if you don't have a bit of a peek now and then at what's on offer in these areas, you may end up missing out on little gems such as the CD Copier.

CD Copier Gamers edition, while aimed at just about any CD-ROM user (er, most of us?), is more appealing to the gamer in us all. Long loading times are purely bothersome. Disk swapping, in most highly evolved gaming environments, a pain in the buttocks. CD Copier addresses these annoyances, simply by creating virtual CD ROM drives on your hard disk. As programs use specific formats to access data stored on mediums such as CDs, copying the remaining files straight from a CD to the hard drive will render the program useless - ie. the program can't access the remaining data unless it's in a familiar (CD drive) format. Thus the creation of virtual drives. While this is hardly new technology, the CD Copier brings virtual drive management to the masses with the promise of ease of use.



Perfect for...erm...backups.
Yeah, yeah, that's it. Backups!

With the software included, it is, dead easy to set up a virtual drive for whatever use you see fit. Games that rely heavily on data contained on CD-ROM will benefit most, natch. CD Copier also allows you to create up to 23 virtual drives, which ends the need to disc swap (perfect for games such as Riven).

Now all you need is plenty of hard drive space - as while CD Copier supports compression, the virtual drives still require a couple of hundred megabytes to hold a full CD's worth of data. Supports Standard ISO 9660 and Mixed Mode types of CD.



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the Falcon 4.0 phenomenon

SETUP

COMBAT TIPS

OPTIMISE YOUR PC

MULTIPLAYER HELP

Those frustrating years of waiting are finally over, now it's time to revel in flight sim perfection with Major Ian Lindgren

Falcon 4.0 (F4) has been with us for almost one month now. It's going to be a living, breathing game under constant refinement, development and expansion as MicroProse add to the Electronic Battlefield Series, and push it to its limits. This may frustrate some, because while you can play well on a P233 with 32 MB RAM, you only get the best from the game when you move into the PII line of processors with upwards of 64 MB RAM.

But hey that's life! If we all thought that type of progress was bad, we'd still be using 80286



If we were stuck with Falcon 3 we wouldn't have a game that rated 98% in the last issue!

based processors with 1MB RAM, and that would be sad! However, with entry level processors now being PII based, and all other flight sims pushing into the PII requirements barrier, it just goes to show that MicroProse are developing leading edge gaming for our enjoyment, on our hardware; and for that we are thankful.

We've been lucky enough to gain access to the inner circle of F4; the game developers themselves! This has put PCPowerPlay in a position to bring you "Live and Exclusive" news on F4 in Australia.

Over the coming months we will bring you an entertaining and varied blend of information on F4 aimed at increasing your skill level in the multifaceted F4 environment. Striving to be an Ace? Maybe you just can't quite get the hang of the Air to Air radar modes and 16 submodal combinations? Do you want to know more about the planning capabilities of the game that permit you to bring simultaneity to

the air battle by coordinating the Time on Target for multiple flights? If so, this is for you.

Together with these "skills enhancing" issues, we'll keep you up to date on F4 and the Electronic Battlefield Series; through factual easy to read information and illustrations. We already know a MiG 29 expansion disk is on the way, but what other land masses will see F4 conflict other than the Korean Peninsula? Will there be any air/ground cooperation of the nature that we will soon see between Mr Tank Platoon 2 and the soon to be released Gunship III?

I'm writing this in early January, so my lines of communication with the developers are down until they return from leave. However, in this issue we'll focus on four things; riding you of any concern that F4 is just for hard core flight sim fanatics, optimising your PC to run F4, Instant Action hints, and how to get up and running in multiplayer mode. The latter is a

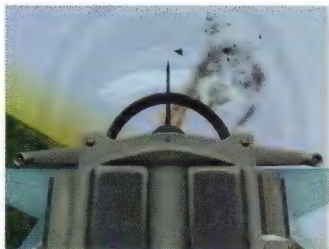


What other land masses will see Falcon 4 conflict?



The E-8C JSTARS platform. The Radar Antenna is the white tube structure on the front underside of the aircraft. This aircraft is used extensively in Falcon 4 campaigns to monitor the progress of war

must do, and I'm sure when I move to Sydney next week, Ben and all the guys at PCPowerPlay will soon be watching their virtual sixes!



Will this be the fate of the PCPowerPlay staff when Maj Ian moves to Sydney? [No - Ed.]

F4 is a Mini University - Learn at Your Own Pace

In this section, my aim is to remove the trepidation some might find with the 600 page Flight Handbook. And that doesn't even include the reams of information on avionics, air, ground and sea weapons platforms, or munitions statistics or characteristics. All this can be found online when you load the game!

Woah; 600 pages and there's more! No sweat, it's a mindset thing. You will enjoy every aspect of the game if you remember that F4 is complex, but only if you make it so. You can happily fly it forever in the "Easy Modes" with all cheats on, such as invulnerability and so on. You can use the game as a mini university and come away after reading all there is, with more theoretical air power knowledge than many "experts" who gave us their opinions during each of the recent Gulf incidents. For example you will know how wrong the reporter is when they describe footage of a "so called" cruise missile attack, that shows cross-hairs on a point target. You will know that what you just witnessed was a laser or TV guided weapon such as an AGM-130A (a jet powered GBU-15 glide bomb) that was aerially delivered.

F4 is therefore a game for all simmers from Novice to Ace. The volumes of information accompanying the game take you there at your own pace, and will fill your mind with enough air power jargon to allow you to have an educated chat with any fighter pilot.

Lock and Load F4!

Intelligent pilots will prepare their PC for F4. Let's quickly look at what you need, and how you should prepare your PC to run the game.

CPUs and RAM. You can play F4 with a P166, but 64 MB RAM is the bare minimum with most graphics options toggled down. Good results can be had



with a P233 and 64 MB RAM, but the best come with PIIIs and greater than 128 MB RAM. When you are hooked, plan an upgrade path.

Video Cards. Here we have a conundrum! What gives the best video graphics? One or two 12 MB Voodoo IIs at around \$450 each, or one 16 MB Riva TNT based card, such as the Diamond Viper V550AGP, at around \$400. Hmm, I know which sounds better to the pocket! Both look just as good in F4.

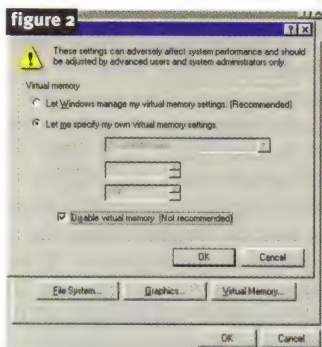
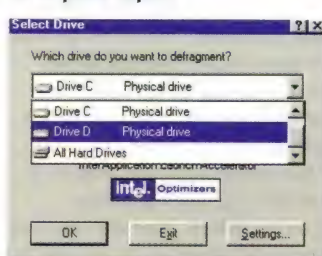
Prepare to load F4. Most of us don't have PII 450s with 128 MB of RAM, so here is my step by step suggestions for loading and running the game. What I recommend is temporarily disabling virtual memory, defragmenting the hard drive, re-enabling virtual memory, then loading F4. The aim is to make the PC and game run efficiently, and to put all F4 files close to one another for fast hard disk access.

If you have F4 installed, defragmenting puts pieces of files together, but doesn't put all the F4 files close to one another. It just dumps them in vacant areas on the hard disk, which may or may not be close to other F4 files. This is not optimal, so if you have already installed the game, I strongly recommend that you follow my instructions below.

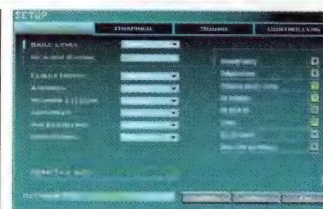
Step 1. If you have already loaded F4, uninstall it. Uninstall will keep your saved game files as Figure 1 shows. If you had F4



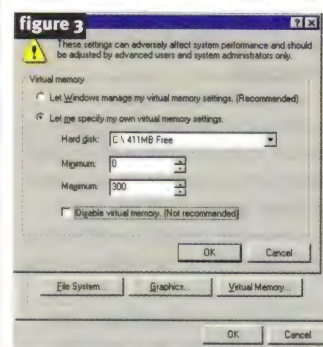
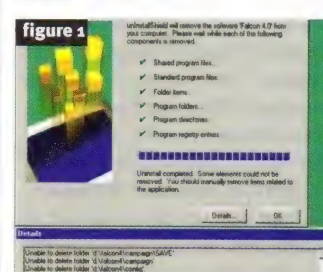
The Online Reference will make you an air power expert!



installed on C Drive, skip to Step 2. If you had F4 installed on another hard drive, defrag that hard drive by selecting Windows Start Button\Programs\Accessories\System Tools\Disk Defragmenter. Then select the drive and complete a full disk defrag even if Win95 advises you that it is only x% defragmented. Win95 will do a full defrag by default.



Maximum configurability from Novice to Ace!



Step 2. The Windows Swap File. Windows uses a part of your hard drive to save portions of programs while they are running as if it was RAM. This is the Swapfile and F4 needs a 250MB+ swapfile! So let's fix this up:

- Select Windows Start Button\ControlPanel\System\Performance\Virtual Memory.
- Click on "Let me specify my virtual memory settings",



The left MFD shows multiple bogeys at ranges 2 - 20 miles!

and then check "disable virtual memory" as shown in Figure 2. Then click on OK and you will be warned that disabling Virtual Memory is not advised. Trust me and do it, and click on "Yes" to continue. Close the System applet and restart Windows as prompted.

c. Defrag C Drive as shown in Step 1. This may take a long time, sometimes an hour or more, so dash off and do something else, like perhaps having a nice pleasant read of the manual.

d. After defragging C Drive you MUST enable virtual memory by selecting Windows Start Button \ Control Panel \ System \ Performance \ Virtual Memory. Then uncheck "disable virtual memory" and set the virtual memory to 300 MB or more, if you have the space (if possible, set the swap file on a different physical drive to the one the game is installed upon). Close the System applet and restart Windows as prompted.

e. Install F4. If you uninstalled it in Step 1, be sure to install it in the same drive and directory as before so you have all your saved files on hand. You should install to either the full 565 MB or 310 MB options.

Well, that should get you going with the best performance possible on your current PC. Your job is to now adjust the graphics settings to obtain what you think is an acceptable frame rate. That's a personal thing, but the if you go to pages 16-9 and 16-10 of the Flight Handbook, you will find excellent assistance on what should be toggled on for your CPU, memory and video card capabilities.

Instant Action - Adrenaline Hit!

Choose 'Instant Action' on Easy Mode, no SAMs or AAA, and you can engage multiple air and surface targets with unlimited resources in your F16. This is the place to hone your skills away from the tight constraints of the canned training missions, and learn survival skills. The two selections are Fighter Sweep and Moving Mud. I'll begin with some survival hints for Fighter Sweep.

When you first enter Fighter Sweep you'll find yourself immediately on the six of numerous TU 16s and IL 28s. Hit 'Shift - P' and move into Freeze Mode. This stops all action but still allows you to use all systems as if suspended in time. Press ";" as this brings up the Stores Management System (Figure 5) on the right Multifunction Display (MFD). You will find that you have Air to Air (A2A) and Air to Ground (A2G) stores aboard.

If you are in Simplified Flight Mode, no worries! What you are carrying won't affect your flight performance. However, if you are in Accurate Flight Mode, anything that creates drag will hinder all aspects of your flight characteristics. Therefore dump the A2G stores via the Jettison Menu by pressing 'ALT - J'. The Jettison Menu pops up on the right MFD and use the mouse to select the stores to jettison. Do this by left clicking on the Option Select Button (the ring of buttons surrounding the MFD) to highlight the stores, then press Spacebar to jettison them. Figure 6 shows the right wing A2G stores ready to be jettisoned.

Do this for both wings and press ";" to exit the Jettison Menu. Punch the "D" key and you are in Dogfight Mode armed with AIM 120s, AIM 9s and the

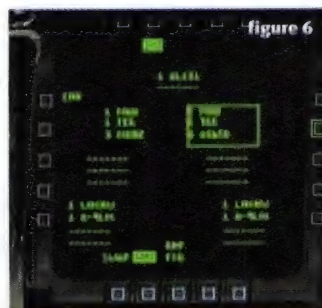


figure 6



figure 5

gun. Unfreeze by pressing 'Shift - P' again and tally ho! Lock up your first bandit by pressing Designate ("o" on the keypad), fire, and press Page Down to Designate the next target. Carry on at your own pace!

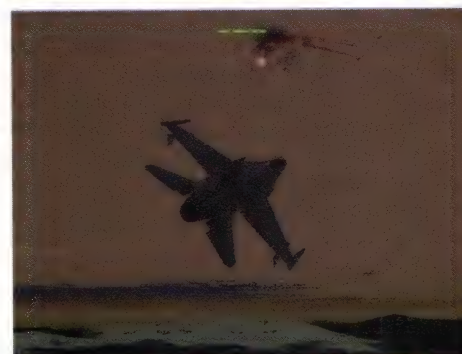
It's time for some hints to keep you going. Remember that an F16's optimal dogfighting velocity is around 450 knots, so keep this in mind with each turn or change in vector. Watch the HUD and keep your hand on the throttle to keep you within the performance envelope. Guns kills can expend ammo at a great rate. Move in until you are less than half a mile from the bogey, and just tap the trigger. If you feel as though you have run out of targets, punch the Q key twice to bring up the AWACS Communications Menus, and request a vector to a bogey.

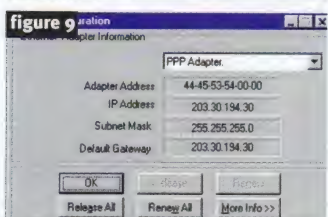
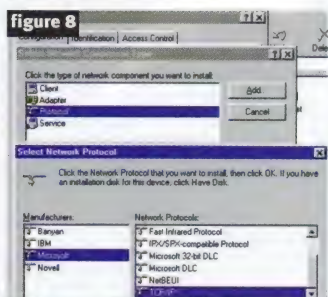
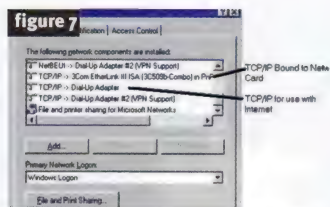
Finally, once you get real slick with the AN/APG 68 radar, turn it off and hit the deck to hide in the ground clutter. Test your skills by bringing up the 1st AWACS Communications Menu, request a picture of the situation, then press "Q" again

and continue to request a vector to the nearest bogey and try to find it silhouetted above you. Take it out with guns!

The Final Frontier - Cooperative Multiplayer Combat

The multiplayer aspects of F4 are one of its greatest attributes. Every mission and campaign is capable of being played over the Internet or LAN between two or more players. Play Head to Head or Cooperative Missions; the latter allows you to team up with





other pilots and work on the same mission against computer pilots, or up to three other teams of four human pilots in Dogfight. Awesome! Let's look at what you need to get you up and running for Dogfight and Cooperative Missions.

The first thing to be aware of is that F4 only supports TCP/IP. You therefore must have TCP/IP loaded as a protocol. If you are already using the Internet you have TCP/IP loaded. However, if you are looking to run the game over a LAN with some others you might not be running it. Check by going Windows Start Button \ Settings \ Control Panel \ Network. Figure 7 shows TCP/IP loaded for both network and Internet connections. If TCP/IP is not listed, then it's not loaded.

If TCP/IP is not loaded select Add, then double click on Protocol, click on Microsoft and scroll down until you can click on TCP/IP. Click OK to load it, close the Hardware applet and you will be asked to re-boot the PC. Ensure this is done for all PCs on the LAN that are going to play F4. Figure 8 graphically depicts this sequence.

Playing F4 over the Internet or over the LAN is relatively the same, however, the only other piece of information you will need for Internet play is your IP address. This tells each player's computer where to find the Host Computer, and the Host Computer where to find each player's computer. The easy way to do this is firstly to log on to your Internet Service Provider (ISP). In most cases the ISP allo-

cates you a different IP address each time you log on. If you don't log on, you won't have an IP address! Once logged on, go Windows Start Button \ Run, then enter the file name "winipcfg" and hit Enter. You now have your IP address as shown in Figure 9.

Hosting a Dogfight

What I'll describe now is a quick once over on how to host a Dogfight over the Internet. Coordinate a time with your mates, log on to your ISP, and start a quick chat session over ICQ or email. The Host should be the player with the fastest machine, the most RAM, and the fastest Internet connection. That player should identify his/her IP address and inform everyone else. Be sure to set your modem speed to equal the slowest player's modem. This way you'll reduce lag.

All other players select Dogfight and under the Online Tab, enter the Host's IP address and connect as shown in Figure 10. The Host then selects Dogfight and clicks on the Saved Tab and then selects what type of game to play: Furball, Matchplay or Teamplay. The Host selects the game and clicks on Commit. The next screen shows the Host who is connected and players move into their prearranged teams and select the colour for each team as shown in Figure 11. The Host then picks the starting position, and clicks on Commit. This brings up the Rules of Engagement Menu where you select how the game will be

played, ie flight model, realism settings, weapons effectiveness and so on. The Host clicks on Commit once more and you are all in the game! Now all you have to do is stay alive, and kill everyone else...

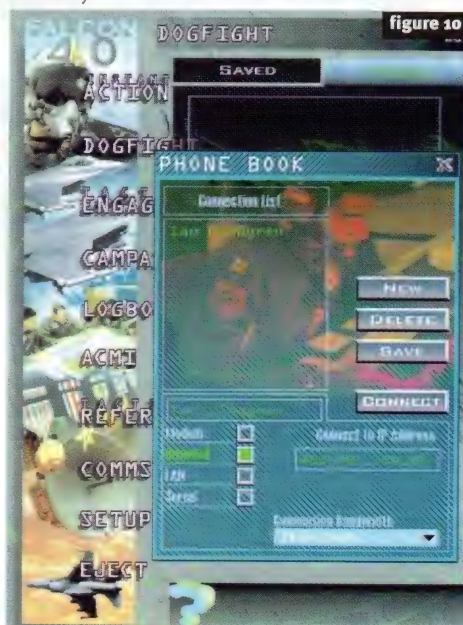
Coming Up Next Month

Next month we'll have some new information on what MicroProse intend to do with F4 and expand on this exciting issue. I also plan to focus in on mission planning; just how do you plan a multi-flight mission to coordinate different flight Time over Targets to ensure that most of the enemy air defence is non-existent when you get there? Finally, check out the F4 web site at

www.falcon4.com for any patches and ensure you select only UK patches, because the US version has not been shipped to Australia. Good Hunting!



Multiplane Dogfight between a MIG 29 in the rear and an F16. Both are showing signs that battle has been joined between both parties!





For many in the sim community time “began” in the early 1980’s with the availability of affordable personal computers. In those days 64K was regarded as a generous amount of RAM - that’s 64K not 64MB!

Programs were loaded via cartridges, tape drives or 5 1/4 inch floppies were the norm, and colour video display was just catching on.

Where it all began...

The 8 bit family (Amiga, Atari) were the premier gaming platforms due to their built-in graphics and sound hardware. They could play MIDI files, sampled sounds and display 320 x 200 colour graphics.

Choplifter

Our earliest computer flight fantasies were satisfied by classics such as “Choplifter”, a 2-D platform game which tasked you with manoeuvring past enemies

to rescue hostages. It was sweaty palms time as you waited for those little people to climb aboard one by one!

Zaxxon

Pseudo 3-D appeared in the arcades and then in short order on 8-bit home computers in Zaxxon, a scrolling game which required you to manoeuvre past deadly obstacles in a 3rd person perspective view.

Rise of the PC

In 1985 Atari Corporation introduced its new 16-bit computer system, the 520ST. 520 referred to the whopping 520K of memory and ST for Sixteen/Thirty Two bit processor. The 520ST represented a major step forward in computer and operating system design. This series of computers also had dedicated graphics chipsets and in-built MIDI sound chips.

PC video modes during the 1980’s were:

2 colour Hercules
4 colour CGA
16 colour Tandy 1000
18 colour EGA
256 colour VGA.

In about 1991, 486 processors and Sound Cards gave PC’s comparable sound and graphics capabilities and many of the gaming community switched platforms. By 1992 SVGA was supported by the S3 chipset which enabled graphics resolutions of 640 x 400. Then, as now, games producers continued to “push the envelope” by writing code which demanded the most out of the currently available consumer hardware.

This trend continues in the late 1990’s with contemporary flight sims supporting the “3D” chipsets such as Voodoo II. According to surveys, about 50% of PC users were still operating on 386 and 486 machines in 1998!





The games

1987

Gunship

Supplied by Boomerang Software Exchange

(02) 9633 1091

boomerang@morgan.net.au

Atari, Amiga, PC

Publisher: Microprose

There were no external views available, just a cockpit with a bedazzling array of engine sensors and weapons displays. (Bedazzling for 1987 anyway).

Takeoff seemed very fussy compared to Jet piloting...until it came time to land the beast! Engine start left, Engine start right then drop the clutch to start the rotors spinning. Collective up and the rotor blades bite savagely into the air. With a leap and whoop you're airborne!

What's this...incoming radio message "HIND HELICOPTER AIRBORNE". Gee thanks guys, you could have told me that before takeoff!! And thus the hunt begins. Luckily the weapons computer helps you with target recognition. The venerable Mi-24 Hind Gunship became a household word after this game.....not that anyone could recognise it!

If you survived the Hind attack your next problem was SAM attacks. In pretty short order you worked out that to survive in this modern battlefield "scurry and peek" tactics were the order of the day.

That is, fly as fast and low as possible to a hill, pop up briefly for a peek, move around the hill to where you think it's safe, then pop up again for weapon release. You could also land during a mission to check damage, end

the mission, refuel...nice touch!

Overall, in it's day a great sim. Today I'd go for the best Chopper sim your hardware can handle. Got a 386? Get Gunship 2000. A 486? Get Longbow.

1990

MiG-29 Fulcrum

Developed by Simis

Publisher: Domark

At this time, the MiG-29 had just been revealed to the west at the Farnborough Airshow. It seemed to be a sexy mystery machine that could perform spectacular manoeuvres such as the "tailslide".

The avionics were way ahead of the pack with off-boresight (away from the front of the aircraft) targetting. This meant you could look around and lock up a bogey no matter where he was. Combine this with the high-angle-off dogfight missiles and you could do pretty well in a dogfight!

The following year this sim was updated and re-released as MiG-29M SuperFulcrum. An A-A radar display was added. The menu screens saw a transition from bitmapped graphics in MiG-29 Fulcrum to 256 colour photographic images. Instead of the odd lonely hill, we now had whole mountain ranges to crash into!

1991

Chuck Yeager's Air Combat

Supplied by Boomerang Software Exchange



(02) 9633 1091

boomerang@morgan.net.au

PC DOS

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Designer: Brent Iverson

Available aircraft were P-51 Mustang, Fw-190, F-86 Sabre, MiG-15, F-4 Phantom, MiG-21 Fishbed

50 Historic missions were recreated from World War 2, Korea and Vietnam. Chuck Yeager's voice encouraged and berated us via 8-bit samples. Relevant flight info was available in pop-up windows. This feature would reappear in US Navy Fighters 1996.

An air combat builder was included to create your own dogfights. Chuck Yeager welcomes you with "It's a great day for flying". He even provides in-flight help! Chuck Yeager's was a true classic. Many keen simmers are still playing it! It runs well on 386 machines.

Falcon 3.0

Supplied by Boomerang Software Exchange

(02) 9633 1091

boomerang@morgan.net.au

Falcon 3.0 pushed the boundaries of PC simming on it's release. It had all the features anyone could dream of at the time and the gameplay was riveting. Even today it's a hoot and if you only have a 486 you really can't get much more excitement than what's available in the Falcon battleground. Luckily you can adjust the AI of the SAM operators, AAA and enemy pilots because on the higher settings

they are murderous!

The mission designer allowed you to create complex strike missions, tasking different aircraft types with Wild Weasel (SEAD - Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses), CAP (Combat Air Patrol) and Interdiction/ Strike.

It needed a "maths coprocessor" to run the "high fidelity flight model". These are standard in CPU's from the 486 onward but they were an expensive option at the time. The ACMI recorder (Air Combat Manoeuvring Instrumentation) could record your entire mission and then play it back from cock-



Mini Glossary

AAA Anti-Aircraft-Artillery

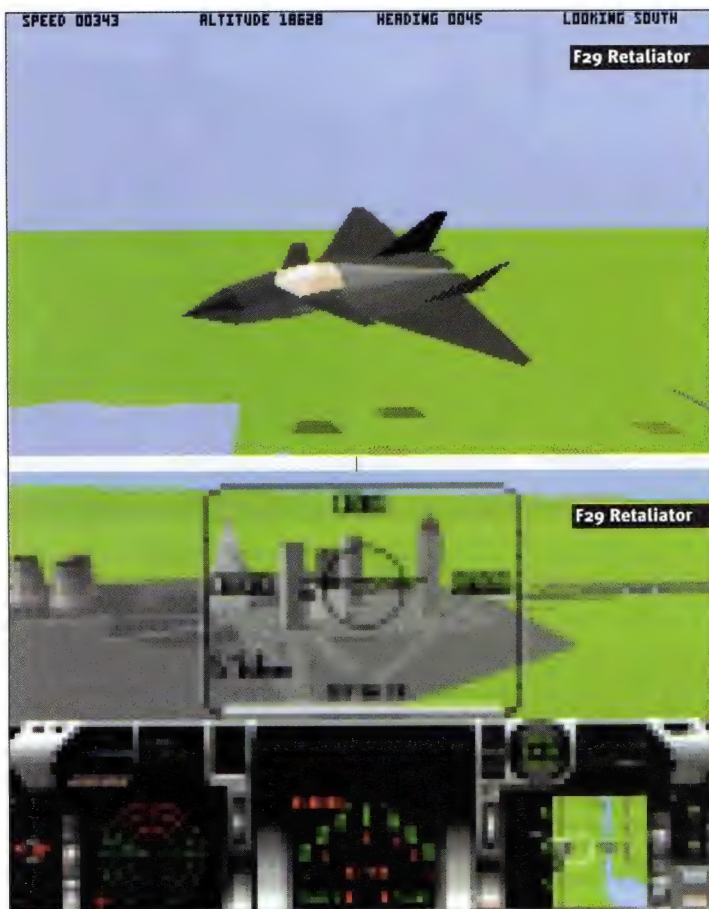
Canard m Small wing, usually near the cockpit and fully moving

HUD Head-Up-Display

MFD Multi-Function Display

RWR Radar Warning Receiver

SAM Surface to Air Missile



pit, external or 3D diagrammatic perspectives.

The dynamic campaign involved you in complex and long struggles which lasted for days, with the FEBA (Forward Edge of the Battle Area) moving back and forth as the fortunes of war waxed and waned. This meant you could come under attack as you took off or returned to base and added to the sense of urgency.

Your wingmen were very capable and you soon learnt to listen to their radio messages! The inclusion of multiplayer network play saw the growth of "Virtual Squadrons" worldwide as players discovered that even the most capable computer opponent wasn't as scary as a human with a grudge!

Probably one of the best choices for a 486 owner who wants a realistic and fluid aerial combat experience with almost unlimited depth of play.

F29 Retaliator

Supplied by Boomerang Software Exchange

(02) 9633 1091

boomerang@morgan.net.au

This sim was fast, even on a 386. The graphics were detailed by the standards of the day, with cities, bridges, roads, islands, mountains and moving vehicles. The enemy aircraft were MiG-29's, for some reason referred to



as "Lizards" The Atari ST version even had digitised speech!

The cockpit had 3 MFD's with multiple display options for each one. Flight modelling was shall we say "simple" with the aircraft flying on rails most of the time, but still capable of entering a stall or deadly spin. The innovations seen in F-29 Retaliator matured



in TFX, EF2000 and then the F-22 series. If you have a 386 then this sim is a bit of fun.

F117A Stealth Fighter

Supplied by Boomerang Software Exchange

(02) 9633 1091

boomerang@morgan.net.au

Atari ST, PC DOS

Publisher: Microprose

Designers Joe Hellesen and Ed Fletcher.

This sim has been referred to as "the mother of all sims" due to the many innovations it presented and the atmospheric way the sim is constructed.

F-117A was an enhancement and rerelease of F-19 (1988) by Sid Meier. The game kicks off with a cinematic intro, climaxing with a close-up of the FLIR display during a LGB attack on a Hardened Hangar.

If you choose to fly the "real" F117 you have a very limited weapons capacity. I usually chose the Microprose version which has 4 weapons bays! Just in case, you know...

This was one of the earliest sims to include carrier launches and if your mission went well, carrier landings as well! The navigation kit is pretty special too. You can engage autopilot, then adjust the waypoints in flight to avoid threats and mountains! The HUD can be customised a number of ways and the Counter-measures include chaff, flares, IR jammer and Radar jammer! Also, the FLIR can look in all directions and lock on to ground and air targets.

During the debrief your flight path is replayed and all your embarrassing mistakes aired one by one. To add insult to injury, your colleagues often pass unflattering remarks on your performance. It's little features like this that add greatly to the 'atmosphere' of this sim.

In my first re-visit to F-117A I got quite lost and actually landed on an enemy airbase, then had to taxi to the hangar and finally wondered why I was still 100 miles from home base! After a very stealthy take-off, I limped home and landed with 25 lbs of fuel remaining!! Whew!!

For my second trip down memory lane I turned up the heat (enemy skill levels). That was OK, I fought my way in to take a picture of the downtown Baghdad nuclear plant. The secondary objective was to destroy POL storage tanks. I even managed that, but was then bounced by a gaggle of Northrop F-5's and MiG-31's.



At this point my "situational awareness" dropped dramatically as events crowded in and my mission ended in a fireball as I contacted terra firma rather too firmly!

That actually is the strongest point of this sim.... it makes you think!

1992

F15 Strike Eagle III

Supplied by Boomerang Software Exchange

(02) 9633 1091

boomerang@morgan.net.au

The CD ROM reissue contained state of the art video sequences, tutorials and a 27 minute History of the Strike Eagle.

The Briefing covered your Primary and Secondary targets and possible threats. You flew from the front seat (Pilot) and the back seat (Weapon Systems Officer) The term "back-seat-driver" took on new connotations after this!

The 7 MFD's could display 12 different readouts....and you could store your own preferences for Navigation, Air to Air and Air





to Ground modes too. Unprecedented detail was depicted in the terrain and objects, and at the time F-15 III had the most spectacular explosions seen on a PC screen.

The padlock view worked well with flashing lock on indicators on your canopy rail. Check out the tracers from enemy AAA.

If you have a fast 386 or any 486 there is still plenty of fun to be had in this sim.

AV8B Harrier Assault

PC DOS Developed by Simis

Publisher: Domark

Hardware requirements: 486, S3 Graphic card

This was one of the first SVGA sims. The visuals were similar to what we had previously only seen in military simulators and in a beautiful set of pastel colours. The flight model was very fluid, and you could choose Indonesian F-16's and A-4 Skyhawks as well as C-130's to shoot down (or be shot down by!), and palm trees, huts and barracks to bomb.

Because of the limited resources and the nature of the campaign, you felt really involved with the progress of your ground troops. Occasionally the fleet would come under air attack as well and you could watch the action from the "pri-fly".

The SAMs and AAA were very scary. The wow factor increased tenfold when you saw a smoke trail heading towards you! Ground units such as hovercraft, landing craft, tanks, APC's were included and they slugged it out with great explosions which generated persistent

columns of smoke. Actually, navigation got easier as the campaign progressed..... you just flew towards the smoke columns!

You could have up to 6 Harriers flying at once and jump in and out of any of them! It used to get sticky if you jumped into a Harrier just as it flew past a SAM site though!

Energy management was very necessary in dogfights as the Harrier bled off speed quickly, particularly if you used thrust vectoring - a technique known as VIFFing, Vectoring in Forward Flight.

The campaign progressed in real time. You controlled the Fleet, Ground Forces, Attack Choppers, Special Forces (to lase targets for you), Infantry and of course your limited supply of Harriers. Actually all the resources were limited and the campaign was quite difficult to win (actually I never once won it!).

AV8B Harrier Assault has immense replay value as the campaign never plays the same twice, and it is entirely up to you as to how you win the ground war.

1993

Tornado

Supplied by Boomerang Software Exchange

(02) 9633 1091

boomerang@morgan.net.au

PC DOS (Runs in Wines/98 if you make a boot disk with the setup program)

Publisher: Digital Integration

You can fly the Tornado IDS (Interdiction- Strike) and the Tornado ADV (Air Defense Variant). From the moment the game booted into the gorgeous SVGA shell you knew this was going to be a special experience.

The training missions covered every aspect of operating the Tornado and you were wise to work your way through them. This sim gave you more opportunities to "buy the farm" than most! For a start, your typical mission profile involved flying at barely subsonic speed at 200 feet altitude, threading your way past fighter patrols and SAMs and then flying over the enemy's most heavily defended assets - his airbase!

Luckily the Tornado has a comprehensive Terrain Following Radar suite (TFR) which keeps you off the ground most of the time. The best avionics can't save you from pilot errors however! For example the wing sweep has 3 settings. If the

wings are swept too far back the plane won't be able to climb over obstacles in time at high speed and low altitude.

As you fly around you realise that the world of Tornado is a busy place. Enemy and friendly aircraft are everywhere, going about their business. Choppers taking off, fighters prowling, bombers bombing, and Tornados doing their thing. The airbases themselves were the biggest and most varied in layout the sim world had seen in 1993.

This is one plane where even takeoff necessitates that you RYFM (Read Your F\$@#\$ Manual) first! And what a manual! 332 pages detailing weapons delivery modes, landing a damaged aircraft (very relevant to this sim) and how to get from A to B in one piece.

If you are interested in the world of low level strike aircraft such as the Tornado or F-111 you can't go past this sim. It runs very smoothly on a 486.

Strike Commander

Supplied by Boomerang Software Exchange

(02) 9633 1091

boomerang@morgan.net.au

PC DOS

Publisher: Origin

Designer Chris Roberts

You flew the F-16 Falcon in a campaign which had animated cut scenes and lots of dialogue with your squadron mates. If you made it through the first campaign you were given a F-22 to play with! The graphics were VGA 320 x 200 with unprecedented detail in the texture-mapped aircraft and terrain. This

was one of the first sims which needed a 486 to run! (A 486 cost about US\$5,000 at the time). Also featured a scrolling "virtual cockpit" with "padlock view".

Strike Commander had a scripted campaign with multiple branches. The game was very atmospheric due to the strong storyline and features like the ability to choose your own wingman/wingwoman! There was a lot of spoken dialogue during flight and between missions. The sim's lighter moments included wrangling with your squadron's accountant! Was this the first "Accountancy Combat Sim"?

1994

F14 Fleet Defender

Supplied by Boomerang Software Exchange

(02) 9633 1091

boomerang@morgan.net.au

This sim is the most thorough treatment of Carrier Fleet Defense ever seen on a PC. It comes with 2 manuals (over 200 pages) detailing tactics, theory, manoeuvring, threats, formations and operation of the Tomcat Weapons systems.

Setting up enemy formations for a dogfight is made easy in





the instant action module. The 3D diagram of fighter formations is much clearer than the 2D diagrams shown in most other sim manuals, good one guys! This is typical of the attention to detail in this sim. It contains the most lucid and detailed discussions of Air Intercept Tactics I've seen anywhere.

The F-14 is nicely modelled with moving tailerons and sweeping wings. Also note the lighting, at different times of day the clouds take on totally different appearances. At low level the waves skim by at a pulse-quickening rate.

The cockpit contains a bevy of analogue dials and gauges. In the backseat, or Radar Intercept Officer station, there is full radar kit from which you can plan and execute intercepts 200 miles from the air targets! Your backseater keeps a lookout for bogey's while you're up front flying the plane. It's just as well he does because there's a big collection of bad guys out there gunning for you.

The graphics are VGA 320 x 200 and based on the F15 III engine. This is about as much detail as it's possible to get out of VGA so if you have a 486 computer and want some challenging Naval Aviation fun you can't go past Fleet Defender.

US Navy Fighters

PC DOS (Re-released in Fighters Anthology for Win 95)

Publisher: Jane's Combat Simulations

Designer: Brent Iverson.

Player Aircraft: A-7E Corsair, F/A-18 Hornet, F-14 Tomcat, F-22, Su-37.

USNF was the first sim with textured sky, land and sea in SVGA. Of course the game was a slide-show on a 486 with all the graphics options on high. Graphics resolutions were available from 320 x 200 up to 1024 x 768!

Each campaign mission is preceded by a video briefing and a chat with your squadron mates, then a detailed brief from CAG. The mission map shows your waypoints, which you can adjust to taste.

In the first campaign mission you have to escort Boris Yeltsin to safety - somewhat reminiscent of the 1998 movie "Air Force One".

USNF is a good introduction to Military Sims. the action takes place at a sedate speed and you get to fly a variety of aircraft and missions. The flying speed seems to be about 1/2 that of many other sims, which is not a bad thing when you're getting familiar with carrier ops. You can even slow the action further! Also the default size of objects is bigger than normal, change the zoom setting to minus 33% (press - key twice) for more realistic object sizes/ distances.

Instead of an array of cockpit instruments as in most sims, there were pop-up windows to display essential data. The concept behind this was to maximise time spent looking out of the aircraft, rather than flying around with your head stuck in the dials! The windows displayed summaries of the data a pilot would abstract from looking at dials and gauges.

It has a powerful mission editor, which matured more fully in ATF and NATO Fighters. The landscape includes cities, Chernobyl Nuclear Reactor

(don't blow it up please!) and numerous objects such as bridges and radar towers. Late in the campaign you were allowed to fly the F-22N, a 'Navalised' version of the F22.

Probably the weakest aspect of the sim was the handling characteristics around the airport. The planes always felt jerky on takeoff and tended to "float" forever on landing - especially the F22, as you practically had to nosedive the runway to get that mother down! Overall, a lot of fun in it's day. If you want to get it now, buy Fighters Anthology.

1995

Su-27 Flanker

Supplied by GT Interactive Software

The SQUADRON COMMANDER'S EDITION contains the original release, the version 1.5 upgrade, and 150 additional missions.

Developer: The Fighter Collection /Mindscape

Publisher: SSI

Originally designed to run on 386 and low end 486 machines, the project was taken on by SSI and revised to SVGA graphics resolution. The flight model has been very highly praised, and was designed by a Russian team.

The cockpit is detailed and authentic. Be warned that the instrumentation is in Russian, but the excellent manual explains all! The Russians also fly in metric, (altitude in metres instead of feet and speed in kilometres per hour rather than knots) but if this is too much to cope with you can set the read-outs to good old imperial.

There are a number of aircraft modelled in Su-27 Flanker including the MiG-29 Fulcrum, F-16 Falcon, F-15 Eagle and the Su-25 Frogfoot. All control surfaces move during flight and the attention to detail is extraordinary.

Dogfighting is fast and fluid

with the enemy pilots flying skilfully and unpredictably. A wide variety of threats are modelled; SAM's, AAA and probably the biggest array of ships seen to date.

Most objects in the sim have moving parts. The world is a relatively small one compared to a lot of sims, covering only the Crimean Peninsula. This is not a drawback during gameplay however as the level of detail provides plenty of action.

Su-27 is a high energy combat sim, fast, fluid and challenging. It is still very popular in network play and runs well on faster 486 machines.

A10 Cuba

Publisher: Dynamix

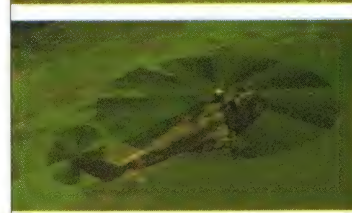
Created by Eric "Hellcats" Parker

Aircraft: A-10 Warthog

You start by taxiing out of the hangar. Yes, a working hangar, not one of those "simulated" hangars with "simulated" doors I had often crashed into in other sims.

The runways are very nice. Plenty of signs to read, yellow lines to follow and most importantly, even the taxiways are of generous proportions. Warning: Don't try to overtake a B-52 - you may think you can fit under that wing but...

A-10 has a great cockpit, in



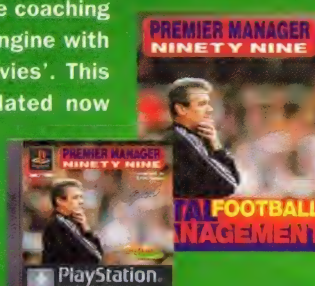
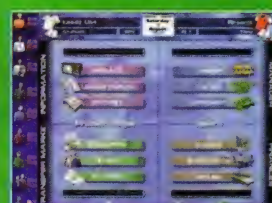
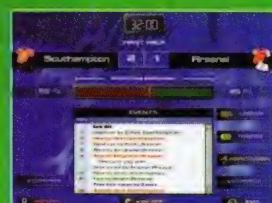
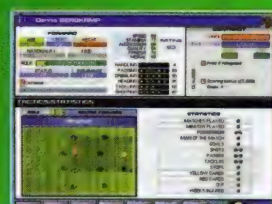
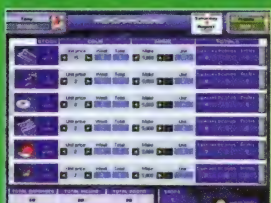
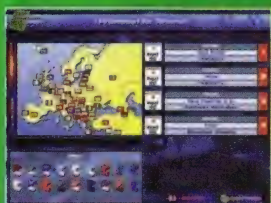
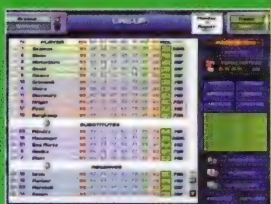
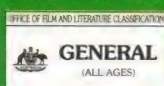
MANAGER JUST GOT BETTER! THE ULTIMATE SOCCER

PREMIER MANAGER 99

Football is bigger than ever, more people watching, reading and playing it. Unlike a pure soccer simulation, Premier Manager Ninety Nine seeks to fulfil the dreams of millions of armchair football fanatics by giving them the chance to immerse themselves into the strategic world of football management. Upon its release, this game will be the most realistic and playable football management simulation available.

Premier Manager Ninety Nine encapsulates all that is good about football Management simulations from the coaching and finance elements to the 3D match engine with commentary from Mr. football 'Barry Davies'. This product has been over-hauled and updated now includes all the new data for the coming season. Premier Manager Ninety Nine will capitalise on the outstanding success of the #1 selling 97 & 98 versions and will be the biggest title of this genre.

Exclusively distributed by





fact one of the nicest analogue cockpits I've seen. All the buttons work and can be operated with the mouse, which certainly speeds up the learning curve. There's a host of dials and they all work! The APU (Auxiliary Power Unit) kicks in. Engine RPM picks up, the APU cuts out and then you advance the throttle.

The flaps have 3 stages: 10, 20 and 30 degrees, nice! Techno-geek paradise - the Radar Warning Receiver and Multi-Function Displays have self-test modes! Not that they ever break, but hey!

There are structures everywhere, and when you fly past at 50ft it's "Pucker Factor 9!" The sensation of altitude and speed at low level is up there with the best. All the planes are hard to spot, especially when they get down low.

Landings are quite squirrely, especially when you disable the

Stability Augmentation Device. You really have to work to fly this baby, but it's worth it. This sim is one of that rare breed which begs to be flown! The handling from taxiing to landing is pure flight sim joy! The wealth of detail, smoothness and sense of speed add up to an addictive experience.

Hardware requirements:

PC, Windows 95, 486DX2/66, 8 MB RAM, 70 MB of hard disk space VESA local bus (VLB) or PCI video with 1 MB RAM, 256-color SVGA (640 x 480), Sound Blaster 16-compatible sound card

EF2000

Publisher: Digital Image Design
Supplied by Boomerang Software Exchange

(02) 9633 1091

boomerang@morgan.net.au

From engine start, I mean two engine starts, you knew this was a new kind of flight sim

experience. Taxiing quickened the pulse as the Eurofighter bobbed and bounced on its suspension. Sunlight glinting through the canopy, wheel brakes on, engine spooled up and the beast was straining at the leash. Then the brakes were off and the tyres began to rumble. At 120 knots the dragon leapt into the air. Wow, there's not much flat terrain in the Scandinavian countries apparently, so keep it over 5000 ft.

Detailed avionics include a virtual cockpit, which has readable instruments as you scroll your view, and the TIALD (Thermal Imaging and Laser Designation Pod). This marvelous bit of kit apparently formed the basis for a software training aid which DID created for training RAF Jaguar Pilots.

Hardware req: 486 DX66, 2xCD, soundcard, SVGA graphics, mouse. Optimum specification: P90, 4xCD, Thrustmaster (or similar) joystick.

If you have a fast 486, this sim will run very smoothly in 320 x 200 resolution. If you are a Pentium owner, get the Super EF2000 version for Win 95.

AH-64D Longbow

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Atmosphere is the keyword as the cinematic cut scenes set the scene and your irascible instructor takes over. All the game elements conspire to immerse you in the world of Army Aviation. This is one sim where visual navigation is essential and enjoyable. There are plenty of landmarks and objects to get your bearings from.

The workload seems a lot higher than in a fast jet, mainly due to the low altitude (nap-of-the-earth) flying. There is an auto-hover mode that you can engage under 15 knots and it will hold your current altitude. This gives you time to wipe the sweat out of your eyes and to use the weapon targetting systems.

One of your main enemies, and friends in Longbow is the terrain. You'll use it to mask yourself from enemy AAA and SAM radar. The instructor recommends you fly below 75 feet altitude. This was nerve wracking to say the least, but on the other hand the terrain is your best friend when evading predators such as the Q-5 Fantan (Chinese Fighter-Bomber).

Jane's provide the usual excellent database of information on your threats and allies. The whole battlefield is alive with

action, artillery strikes, prowling Gunships, and armour battles. Explosions are richly detailed with long smoke columns, with secondaries and turrets flying in all directions! Su-25 Frogfoots come skimming in at treetop level to wreak havoc on your armoured columns.

The battlefield is full of action, armour battles, artillery strikes, air strikes, Hind Gunships lurking around, and a plethora of civilian objects, bridges, buildings, shrines (yes there are cultural artefacts to blow up as well!)

The sense of mission is heightened by the animated briefing map. You can watch your choppers, typically 4 flights, fly their routes across the map and back. This gives you a clear view of how the mission is expected to unfold. Mind you, in the few hours I spent in the "Longbow 2" world I was happy to get near the FEBA and back in one piece!

If you have a Pentium and want to spend at least a few happy months flying Attack choppers from the relative safety of your armchair, get the Longbow Anthology. It's 4 CDs chock-a-block with action and the graphics are superb.

MiGMan's recommendations

Dollar for dollar flight sims must represent some of the best value in the gaming world. They create a 3 dimensional world where your only restraints are the laws of physics. You can fight battles or just potter around the world in your favourite plane or chopper.

If you have a 286 machine, look for the 1980's sims. Some of these may still be found in bargain bins. To be frank though, you should really consider an upgrade!

For 386 owners I would recommend buying Chuck Yeager's Air Combat and F-177A Stealth Fighter...everyone has their favourites but these two sims will introduce you to dogfighting with guns and missiles in Chuck Yeager and operating more complex weapons in F-177A.

486 owners have a lot of options and Pentium owners even more. Browse through this article, check out the hardware specifications and go for it! Make a wish list and head down to your local computer games outlet.





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The making of a 3D game engine

It's one of the most technically challenging aspects of game design, but Mr 3D himself, **Jere Lawrence** explains all the hard bits

The world of 3D and 3D programming is easily one of the most interesting aspects there is to computers and computer gaming. Short of writing an operating system there isn't a more complex form of programming that mixes mathematics, artistic appeal, architectural design and sheer artistry in the realms of colour,

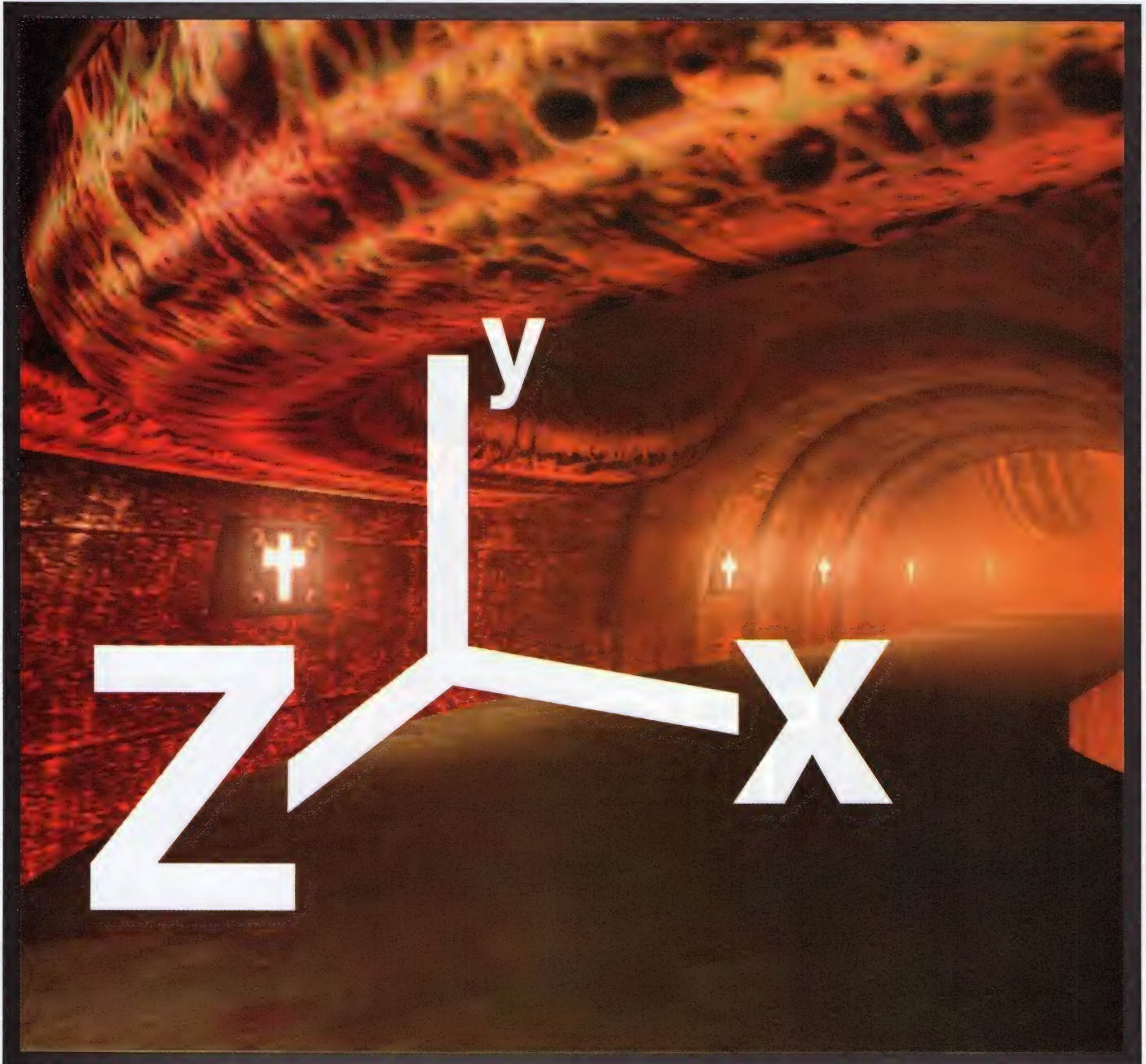
lighting and reflection.

To start our journey into the realms of the numerous masterpieces out there in the world of 3D engines it's worth taking a technical look at just how 3D works. For some this may be a little too much but you should skim through it anyway. For others it will be a fun refresher on simple geometric mathematics.

Many of the algorithms in 3D engines use what are known as Cartesian coordinates to describe 2 and 3 dimensional space. Cartesian coordinates are known as such because legend has it that the seventeenth century philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes was lying in bed one day watching a fly buzz around the ceiling when he con-

ceived the coordinate system.

It occurred to Descartes that the position of the fly at any given instant could be described with only 3 numbers, each representing the insect's position relative to a fixed point: its x,y and z position. His idea was included in the long appendix to a book published in 1637 and launched a new brand of mathematics



combining features of geometry and algebra which came to be known as analytic geometry.

Putting Cartesian coordinates into practice is as simple as grabbing a piece of graph paper and making a number line. We'll start with a 2D example, follow on if you wish.

Triangle Geometry

Any 2D shape can be represented by a sequence of points or "vertices". As each vertex consists of an ordered pair of numbers (i.e. the x coordinate followed by a y coordinate), they can easily be stored in a matrix or "array". The simplest object to make is a triangle which consists of only 3 points. Triangles are in fact the life blood of all 3D environments as every object made consists of triangles alone.

To draw a triangle on graph paper you would plot the coordinates (1,1) (2,2) (3,1) [see fig.1]. All you've got now are 3 dots (or vertices). However if you join them you will see your triangle. The flexibility of this with a computer (as you can imagine) is quite extraordinary. To turn the equilateral triangle into an isosceles triangle, all that needs to be done is change the second coordinate to 2,3.

Making a square requires only 4 coordinates and we can look at some nifty formulas for modifying it. Plot a square using the points (1,0) (2,0) (2,1) (1,1) [see fig.2] and join them together. From those simple points there are now numerous ways the object can be modified.

If you wanted to expand the square to twice its size (say because you were moving closer

to it), 2 simple calculations need only be performed.

$X \text{ co-ordinate} = r [\text{times}] x$
 $y \text{ co-ordinate} = r [\text{times}] y$
 where r equals the scaling value.

To turn the square into a rectangle another simple formula could be used.

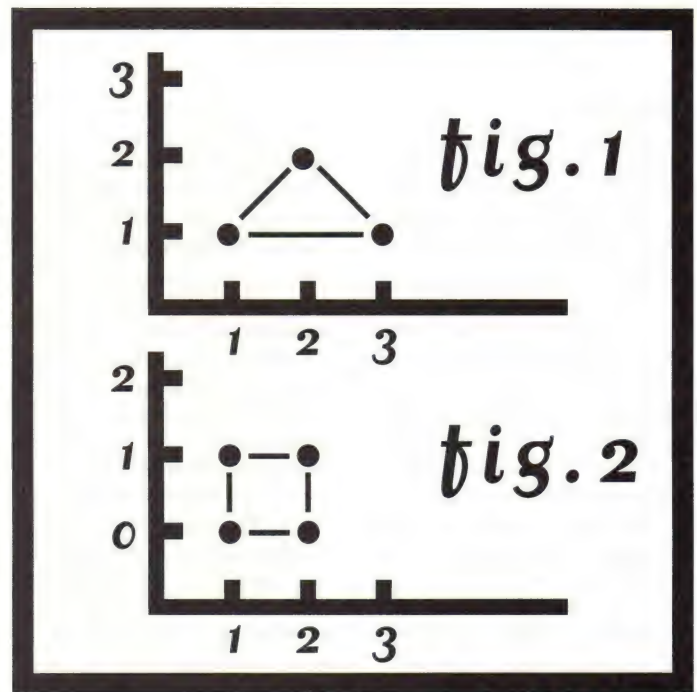
$X \text{ co-ordinate} = x + u$
 $y \text{ co-ordinate} = y + u$
 where u equals the number of units to add.

If you've been following on some graph paper (or in your head) you can see that representing an object as a series of vertices makes animating something a lot easier than through traditional page flipping techniques. Although these examples have been only 2 dimensional and simplistic the means of object manipulation remains the same. Once the vertices for an object are in hand it can be changed dynamically through mathematical equations.

The next step from these 2D operations is of course 3D, which does rather make the process considerably more complex. Particularly since a monitor is only a 2 dimensional device. Here's where a lot of the true ingenuity of 3D comes into play, and it all revolves around the Z axis.

3D depth

A process known as perspective projections is what gives us a sense of depth in our 3D games. The z axis (in a primitive example) actually becomes little more than a divider or multiplier. For every movement forward or backward, every vertex is divided by the z axis. Moving back from



an object using this method will make the object become smaller, thus emulating real life.

3D games programmers really are the elite of the elite and 3D engines are infinitely more complicated than the very brief descriptions offered here. As a simplistic primer, what we've touched on is fine but the modern 3D engine is in fact a dynamically generated world with fully scalable moving camera systems. The virtual environments are complete with actors (controlled by even more complex artificial intelligence routines) and complex algorithms that pre-remove hidden faces. With 3D accelerators has come the addition of mip maps, bilinear filtering, translucency and transparency to name only a few effects.

A BSP file in Quake 2, for example, is in fact an entire world described as a series of vertices, textures, lighting maps and

other relevant information. This world is streamed out of the data file and a viewfield (called a camera) moves around the world. In a first person game, you in fact are this camera. In a 3rd person game, things become that much more complex as the programmers have to try and analyse what the camera is seeing and dynamically modify the view.

3D Science

Yet we still haven't even begun to discuss the physics that control a character's movements, weapon physics, calculations for weapon damage, location damage, splash damage and physics for weapons that bounce. There is so much to a 3D game engine, that I have nothing but pure respect for anyone that works on and creates one. Sure some engines are better than others, but they're all incredible achievements.

the outdoor engine



The outdoor environment is one that is often overlooked when 3D engines come to mind. Indoor engines tend to get all the attention but outdoor engines have mustered some extremely playable games such as Interstate 76, Heavy Gear, numerous racing titles and a favourite among many, the flight sim.

Outdoor engines however are very different and offer a whole new challenge to the

programmer. The first and biggest hurdle comes in the realms of distance. They have to calculate and render on large sprawling landscapes. In an indoor environment you have the luxury of a wall that can be easily textured to set the mood.

Once outside however you faced with the problem of how to make your environment not look like a strangely coloured desert. In real life, were you to stand on a hill and look around you would see a lot of objects and activity. Trees, houses, cars, planes, birds, wildlife, the horizon, clouds, the sun in the sky casting

a shadow from all the objects, hills, mountains, lakes and the list goes on.

There's so much to an outdoor environment that currently it's impossible to render a particularly realistic one even with modern accelerators. There's also the consideration of the ground which on this planet we inhabit is particularly hilly and bumpy. The ground in an outdoor environment has to be created with the same vertices mentioned before as a giant polygonal object (or mesh) which means that you have to use triangles (polygons) to create it.

Outdoor Issues

Play Heavy Gear and I76 long enough and you'll begin to see the way around this that developers took was to create changing gradients consisting of great big polygons, or triangles. The reason all these games offer triangular mountains and rock formations is purely for rendering reasons. Indoor environments can create stairs, ramps and scaffolding because the render distance is only metres compared to thousands of kilometres outside.

Next on the complexity list for an outdoor environment is just how far do you render. Even on today's fast processors it's impossible to render too far into the distance because of the texturing, polygons and visible objects involved. If you've ever watched a car drive off into the distance on a straight stretch of highway in the middle of nowhere you'll know that it's visible for a long period of time. This however is not practical in a game where every object consisting of so many polygons is using valuable processor time.

The solution with the advent

of 3D accelerators has been to use fogging. It's great for atmosphere and allows the developers to set a close horizon. Enemies or objects simply graduate in through the fog (meaning that they never need to be rendered if far off in the distance) and if retreating, can reenter the fog and cleanly disappear. On some games, fog has been used a little too liberally however in cases such as Heavy Gear and Cyber Strike 2, it's used perfectly for both mood and functionality.

Another interesting way of dealing with this is in a soon to be released title called Drakan where the developers have created what they call Layer Based level Technology. With the incorporation of flight (the game involves you riding on a dragon), and consequently an aerial view of the world, one of Surreal's biggest challenges was to find a way to keep the frame rate up while having armies of bad guys beneath you on screen.

Instead of going with the standard single landscape surfaces and static BSP Tree environments, they've chosen instead

to use layered morphed geometry. On top of that, they've implemented a system called Level of Detail, or LOD, where the game dynamically scales down the number of polygons the further away you are from the models.

The simplest of outdoor environments however is the Space combat sim. Here the emptiness of space has the luxurious effect of not having to worry too heavily about rendering distance, too many objects, hills mountains etc. There's just you, and generally enemy ships.

Mega Space

It seems a shame then that the mega space sim battle just hasn't been developed yet. Although titles such as Homeworld are set to change this games like Wing Commander Prophecy or Descent Freespace don't really push 3D and their engines to new and exciting depths. Realistically numerous capital ships with hordes of fighter craft should be able to engage in epic battles without taxing modern processors to extreme lengths.

The genre of games that have had the greatest use of outdoor environments have been flight simulators. Some interesting situations have been overcome with these. Irrespective of flight physics and characteristics, in a flight simulation both the Z and the Y axis become substantial to your rendering engine. As discussed earlier in the 3D mathematics primer, the Z axis was used as a scaling mechanism to set object size and mimic depth perception.

In a flight simulation however the Y axis (up and down) become significant in this function as much as the Z does. Ground textures for example are scaled based upon the planes altitude with an optimal visual level set based upon a suspected most oft used altitude.

To date the best use of an outdoor environment would be Microprose's Falcon 4 which uses a vast library of photorealistic textures to map the ground below. It still suffers from the ground being particularly flat but as discussed previously with current technology there's not a lot that can be done about that.

the indoor engine

The indoor 3D engine is by far the most popular one because of its' use in first person action shooters. As engines go, they're also a lot more difficult to write. We discussed the complexities associated with outdoor sims, but an indoor environment offers a whole new set of challenges for the programmer.

Firstly there's the level design. When designing a 3D engine for the indoor environment, entire levels have to be stored in a very large predefined file. More than just the levels vertices, these files have to account for light radiosity, shadows, wall textures, character models, character textures and in certain cases, predefined paths from one location to another to assist the games artificial intelligence.

The primary aspect that makes the indoor 3D engine more difficult is the intimacy the player shares with the environment, particularly from a first and third person point of view. The player will always be able to walk up to objects and examine them closely - or in the case of an

enemy, destroy it. This level of closeness calls for complex texturing on surfaces and even more complex animating systems for the player (in 3rd person circumstances) and the enemies.

Due to the popularity yet complexity of indoor 3D engines one of the more interesting things to come out of the gaming industry is the licensing of engines to other developers. Besides being an excellent way to bring in added income once a games initial appeal has waned, indoor 3D engines have become a kind of status symbol. Even before Half-Life was respected for its incredibly in-depth gameplay there was talk about it long before release purely because it was to use the Quake 2 engine.

Another high profile engine to appear is the Unreal engine which is capturing a lot of support because of its very rich graphical environments and versatility. Ion Storm, for example, have just chosen to use the Unreal engine for their new RPG Deus Ex.

They initially considered using the Quake 2 engine, but

realised that it was specifically geared towards being a shooter. For an RPG they would have had to almost completely rewrite everything but the core renderer. Unreal was the final choice because of its modularity, flexibility, and excellent tools.

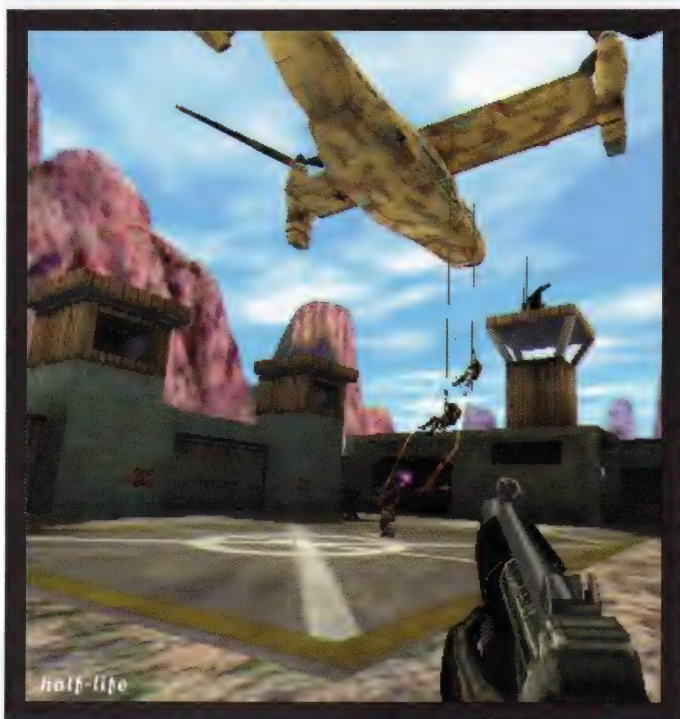
Which brings up an interesting future point. Will we start to see 3D engines as more than just a way for a development house to release their latest game or will extra effort be put into them, trying to make them more adaptable to other projects?

These days there's quite a few indoor engines out there, each offering new and differing features over the other. We'll take a look at these now and discuss some of the different approaches and methodologies used by different developers.



the Quake 2 engine

ID really are the fathers of both complex high delivery engines and licensing agreements. Although the Doom engine of years back was the first to be licensed, Quake 2 offered more in the form of modularity and ease of modification than any other engine.



The Quake 2 engine itself is still a very impressive piece of work. Featuring particle 3D, radiosity light maps, coloured lighting and well rendered enemies, it's a dynamic and exciting engine to play in.

The more interesting aspect of the Quake 2 engine is the premise taken of 3D only. Where other engines and even the Doom engine featured 2D sprites to simulate different effects, the Quake 2 engine does everything in 3D. Although lens flare is totally viable within the Q2 engine (as proved by Half Life) it was never used.

The Quake 2 engine derivatives

Although all the associated engines may share commonalities within each other, their core differences still remain the same. The only thing consistent with all the Q2 derivatives has been in the addition of blood stains to feature on walls and floors where enemies have been shot and killed and weapon shell casings that eject and ping upon landing.

Half Life

Half life really is one of the most amazing 3D first person games to come for a long time. The modifications to the Q2 engine have been minimal graphically, but hefty in other areas.

One of the things that makes the game so interesting is the beautifully crafted NPC sequences, object interactivity and incredible artificial intelligence shown by the other characters within the game.

The reason that the Q2 engine is such a good choice is because of its high frame rate whilst maintaining relatively low (in comparison to other engines) CPU utilisation. Realistically, the object interactivity in HL isn't that big a deal, nor do I think involved that much of a re-write. Q2 itself offered numerous destructible devices similar to Half Life. I will concede however that being able to "use" a mounted machine gun is a nice addition.

Other advantages to the Q2 engine's low CPU utilisation means that Half Life's phenomenal Artificial Intelligence (a pre-dominant and CPU intensive aspect of the game) can be worked in and yet still render numerous enemies.

Graphically, a minor enhancement has been made to allow for translucent/transparent textures over light sources to give the common lens flare effect seen in many games. It's a nice touch to the Q2 engine but in Half Life at least, isn't as clean as you would like. Lens flares are pristine when observed in real life and need to be mimicked accordingly.

Half life also features Skeletal animation which is included as its own subject topic.



Skeletal animation

One of the most implemented new 3D feature to be incorporated into engines is what's referred to as a skeletal animation system. Half Life was essentially the first to use this methodology that has been quickly caught onto by other developers.

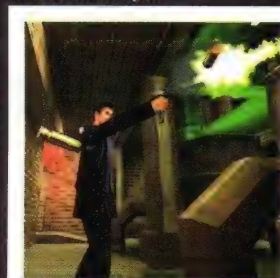
Skeletal animation is the process where modellers create wireframes or skeletons, animate the skeleton, then wrap textured skins around its body. Thus, the skin moves and transforms according to the movement of the body. This effect ultimately allows for much cleaner object animation.

Max Payne, an extremely anticipated release, is another to incorporate skeletal animation and shows the incredible advantages that can be used with a system like this. In Max Payne his overcoat is a separate object on his body and has its own skeleton.

Since the overcoat is a separate animated 3D object it flows freely behind him as he jumps, ducks, rolls, and runs. Skeletal animation also allows modellers to combine multiple animations, such as running and jumping, or rolling and shooting.

Ultima 9: Ascension is another title that uses skeletal animation, but the programmers aren't as pleased with the process as they would like. They're happy that with such a system, the amount of data needed to store or create the animation in the game is greatly reduced. However, the trade off is that you don't get bouncing ponytail hair and giggling bottoms or things of that nature. This is because the model is treated as a skeleton, rather than as a bunch of independent vertices.

(below) Max Payne



Heretic 2

Heretic 2 offers a particularly significant modification to the Quake 2 engine in that the game is presented totally in the 3rd person. This means that you see your character (the player) on screen at all times.

This is in fact a relatively hefty modification (hats off to Raven for completing it in just on a year - John Romero, how long does it take to make a 3D game?) because it involves removing the camera as the player object and making it a follow object.

3rd person offers a lot to the game, particularly if there is lots of physical activity in it. A game that features martial arts for example would be suited for a 3rd person game, purely so that the gamer could enjoy the main character's various animations.

The complexities start when the programmer has to create a form of artificial intelligence to tell the camera just where it should be pointing. These are referred to as dynamic cameras and can be done really well as they are in Heretic 2, or really poorly as in Tomb Raider.

Other additions to Heretic 2 include exceptional animation (possibly skeletal) and the inclusion of spells. The Quake 2 engine may not have seemed to be suited for numerous highly detailed translucent textures. Examining the associated screenshots shows that Ravens modifications to the engine prove it more than capable, in scrumptious 16 bit colour too.

Sin

All bugs aside, Sin brings it own unique and tasty modifications to the Quake 2 engine in the form of hit locations and pain skins. Pain skins are different textures that are placed on the model based on where they are hit. Hit an enemy in the chest and the texture will change to show the area is now blood stained.

The other nice addition that Sin brings to the Q2 engine is hit location. In Sin, more than just shooting consistently, accuracy plays a larger part. Shooting someone in the head will kill them immediately whereas a shot to the leg won't.



Other engines

Unreal

The Unreal engine is the one that has turned the tables on the Quake 2 engine. Numerous companies have already signed up to use it for its extreme graphical appeal and flexibility.

What makes the Unreal engine so appealing to both developer and players is the design strategy that incorporates a lot more 3D functions including translucent lens flares, volumetric lighting, relatively detailed outdoor environments, fogging, animated textures, blood stains on walls, detailed 3D models, reflection, radiosity and metallic effects.

Unreal's feature list makes the game a visual treat, but also means that users need a rather powerful system to run all of this. Likewise, developers desiring to add new functionality to the Unreal engine won't have nearly as much CPU to play with as they would with the Q2 engine.

The only other drawback to the Unreal engine is the number of polygons that are usable in an enemy. The high number required does create an exceptional model with incredible flexibility, however you can't have too many of them on screen - 3 at most.

Graphically though, it has to be said that the Unreal engine is superior to all the others out there. Even the levels of radiosity mapping are increased, creating extremely well defined rooms. Objects such as a fan can also cast an effective shadow over the scene





making for excellent mood sets.

Texturing such as lens flare and weapon effects are also extremely well handled in the Unreal engine. A lens flare from a light has an extremely crisp look to it that sets the engine apart.

Volumetric lighting also allows for a type of coloured fog to appear down corridors and animated textures allow for interesting and varied weapon effects. The Unreal engine is an exceptional piece of work that will receive a lot of developer support. If not because of its graphical appeal but its modular approach seems to make it a more adaptable engine for different genres of game.

Littech engine

The Littech engine is really quite a well made engine that has fathered at least 2 Monolith titles in the form of Shogo MAD and Blood 2. It has received some negative feedback from people who have found it a little too slow, but this is purely because of the exceptional nature of the engine.

Firstly, the Littech engine is the first fully Direct 3D made indoor engine. This means that the engine offers full across the board compatibility with all the 3D accelerators out there. An applaudable feat in itself considering a group of nay-sayers that said it wasn't really feasible.

The other reasons that the Littech engine may be considered slow is only because of all the exclusive features it offers. Play the Blood 2 demo for example and you'll discover that the

human enemies are extremely well rendered with a particularly intelligent AI.

All enemies also cast shadows, bullet holes texture beautifully into walls, coloured lighting affects objects as well as wall surfaces, light maps are extremely well handled, particle 3D (for explosions are supported) as well as scripting for 3D cut scenes.

In the case of Shogo, explosions are handled extremely well with a beautiful particle based main explosion and lots of smaller subsequent explosions and pieces all flying about. There's also the added versatility that within the game you can change between a Mech and being on foot.

The Littech engine is ultimately an extremely full featured engine that is very pleasing on the eye. Anyone who's primary gripe is that it was a little slow should reduce their resolution and consider turning off a few extra features. Once the problem of skips and pauses are alleviated the full enjoyment factor of the engine comes to life.

Descent 3

The Descent engines have never really received the recognition they deserved. Realistically, they have always been quite clever. The developers longed for a space sim that offered the freedom of flight with the kind of shoot round the corner action of (at the time) Doom. The result - being Descent - was quite a successful one.

The engine being used in Descent 3 is called the Fusion engine and offers numerous

rather exciting features (though obviously is still really only suited for a game like Descent).

The first aspect of the Fusion engine that is quite clever is that you can seamlessly leave the inside areas of the game into the outside world. This in essence melds a flight-sim engine with a room-based, structural engine. Based on what has been discussed, this is rather an achievement.

Catching up to the Quake 2 engine, radiosity lighting is now featured as standard. New functions, however, come in the form of specular and reflective surfaces that allow for particularly impressive special effects.

Another special effect that rather impresses me in D3 are Halos. These are clever glows that appear around particular objects. Without further research I can only hazard a guess that these are nifty forms of gouraud shading for they seem far too 3D to just be a tacked on translucent texture.

Max Payne

An engine that has received a lot of positive feedback (though hasn't been sighted by any of us) is the Max Payne one. Here we're promised treats of incredible particle 3D, exclusive independent lighting effects and incredibly well made scripted sequences.

The lighting effects in Max Payne are a form of dynamic radiosity lighting (as opposed to static radiosity as found in the Q2

engine) meaning all the light in the game emanates from specific objects then is reflected from the surface it hits. The effect is supposed to be incredible as lit objects will realistically illuminate other objects around it.

The one scene that everyone who has seen Max Payne raves about is when an enemy lights up a cigarette in a dark alleyway. The light of the match illuminates the contours of his face realistically, bending around each curve and casting the appropriate shadow.

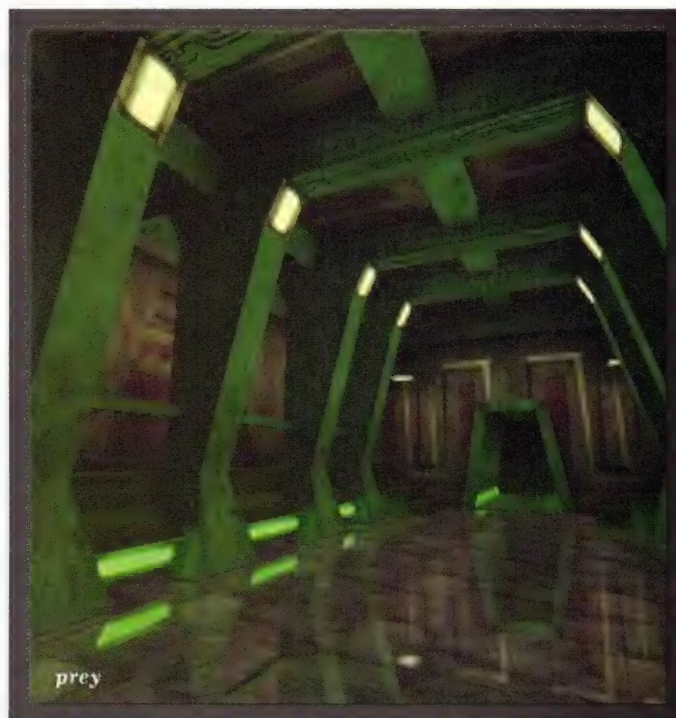
Other effects the engine offers include transparent and translucent textures, coloured lighting, accurate shadowing, reflections, particle based smoke effects, fire, water, and particle based explosions.

Prey

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA.

Vapourware lives.

With that this draws to a close. All development for Prey has since stopped. For those that are curious as to what it was, it was the great Quake Engine Killer of the time. Development for it started at about the same time as Quake 1 and was all hyped up and rowdy, but never eventuated. Yet still, my hat goes off to the team that gave it a shot, there's nothing easy about 3D engines and even the humblest beginnings, or the tiniest achievements in this field of development are acts of sheer genius to at least 97% of the world.



STATE OF PLAY

In the days before
games there was
nothing to do

Adventure/RPG

David Wildgoose

Westwood have two RPGs scheduled for release this year. *Lands Of Lore 3* and *Swords & Sorcery*. The former you will know, while the latter is the new game from D.W. Bradley, author of *Wizardry VII*. Originally to be published by the recently gutted Virgin, it has now been picked up by Westwood and will make use of their established online service for co-op, multiplayer adventuring. Expect one before winter and the other towards the end of the year.

Interplay have two compilation packages out now - *The Ultimate Wizardry Collection* (featuring the core games from the series, plus *Wizardry Gold*) and *The Ultimate Might & Magic Archives* (comprising M&M's 1-5). Possibly worth a look if you're a nostalgia freak



able to tear yourself away from *Baldur's Gate*.

News on the multiplayer patch for *Quest For Glory V* remains bit uncertain. After being pulled from the original release because it wasn't ready in time, Sierra haven't yet ruled out its appearance at some stage in the future. Sounds like a definite maybe to me.

Fans of innovative, real-time, strategic role-playing will be thrilled to hear that *Rage Of Mages 2* has recently entered beta testing. Subtitled *Necromancer*, it is presently destined for a March/April release. Publisher Monolith have also acquired the sexy and very cool-looking RPG, *Septerra Core*. Heavily-influenced by Japanese anime, it appears to be shaping up as one part *Fallout* to two parts *Final Fantasy VII*. And if it's half as good as that, it'll still be an incredible game.

But before I go, I've just been handed the results of the inaugural Adventure & RPG Column Awards, or the Golden Goblins, as they're cheekily referred to. Best Adventure of 1998 goes to *Grim Fandango* - I'd like to have said *Sanitarium*, but inexplicably it still hasn't been released here. Best RPG was *Final Fantasy VII*, just ahead of the sadly bugged *Fallout 2*. *Thief* deserves a special commendation for Greatest Weird Unclassifiable Hybrid Thingy simply for being the best game for the PC last year. Thus, the real game of the year was undoubtedly *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, but Ben would kill me for saying that. Mr Miyamoto, your Golden Goblin is in the mail.

Action

George Argy

Current Game Versions:

Quake2: 3.20 (id have stated this is final)

Half-Life: 1.0.0.6

Unreal: 2.20

Sin: 1.01

In a decision that will probably have many gamers sorely miffed, Valve will be releasing *Team Fortress II* as a stand-alone game rather than as an add-on for *Half-Life*, as was the case up until now. There are pros and cons to this; the pros being that it will probably be a much better game than just an add-on would be, the cons being that you will have to fork out your hard-earned dosh once again for another game. As Cartman would say, yeah, it sucks.

Speaking of the fat bastard, Acclaim has



announced they will be releasing a computer game based on *South Park*. Judging by the screen shots it looks to be a first-person adventure game, with some elements of a shooter thrown in. You can take any of the four kids in single-player mode, with multiplayer allowing you to take almost any of the show's characters. Multiplayer games will include Capture the Flag and Kick the Baby, naturally.

Multiplayer-only gaming fever just won't go away. Not long after GT Interactive confirmed in a press release that they will publish *Unreal Tournament* and *Unreal 2* by Epic Megagames, Id's Paul Steed announced that the *Quake III Arena* demo may be available by the time you hold this hallowed tome in your sweaty little palms. Whether this is truth or fiction remains to be seen, but one thing's for sure: the showdown between these two games as they vie for 'net play supremacy means there can only be one winner - we the gamers!

Volition has announced that they are slaving away at two titles that will have *Descent* freaks mopping the drool off their chins: *Freespace 2* and *Descent 4*. Volition have chosen to overlap development of *Descent 4* with *Descent 3*, thus avoiding long release times between games. Not much information is available about the new games, but Volition really can't go too far wrong - *Freespace* is still one of the best space sims around, second only to the great X-Wing vs Tie-Fighter, in my humble opinion.

Finally, one for the retro freaks. Raven have released a PC port of their Amiga game *Black Crypt*. Grab it at www2.ravensoft.com/crypt.

Strategy

Brett Robinson

Current Game Versions:

Total Annihilation: 3.1

Dark Reign: 1.4

Starcraft: 1.03

Age of Empires: 1.0b

Unbeknownst to many Australian gamers, Bungie recently issued a world wide recall of their latest strategy title; **Myth II: Soulblighter**. Due to a crippling uninstall problem, the game was withdrawn from store shelves. Most copies were returned to the distributor before they had been sold, but Bungie released an update patch for those who managed to snare a copy prior to the recall.

Trekkies have reason to celebrate with the recent announcement of a RTS game based on the Star Trek universe. **Star Trek: New**



Worlds will pit three factions (Federation, Klingon and Romulan) against one another in a violent battle for the control of, you guessed it, previously undiscovered territory. The game will feature full 3D terrain and some previously unseen (read created specifically for the game) units and technologies.

Concerns raised over the visual quality of the upcoming **Alpha Centauri** (after its December 24 demo release) have been answered by Firaxis representatives. Said representatives assured gamers that Alpha Centauri's visuals will soon be undergoing a complete overhaul. Numerous gameplay issues will also allegedly be addressed.

Fans of **Dungeon Keeper** will go into party mode after details have emerged concerning the imaginatively-named sequel; **Dungeon Keeper II**. In addition to seriously tweaked visuals and full support for 3D accelerators, DKII will feature more sophisticated combat algorithms and better spells and traps. An improved creature possession mode will also be implemented. Morale will play a much greater part in battle outcomes and multiplayer support will be improved significantly.

EA's upcoming **Shogun** will soon have a fight on its hands with further details surfacing on **Braveheart**. The developers have promised battles featuring 300+ full 3D combatants on true 3D maps. The decision to use 3D characters rather than 2D sprites (as in **Shogun**) is a very ambitious move that has become an issue of contention among gamers concerned about frame rates and system requirements.

Lastly, **Close Combat III: The Russian Front** has gone gold and should be here soon.

Sims

Maj. Ian Lindgren

There's only two news items in the flight sim world this month as we continue to be bombarded with the final WWII sims that continue to impress with each new release.

We've been advised that **Flanker 2** terrain will be based on stereographic satellite imagery. It covers the entire Crimea, parts of the Western Caucasus and Northern Turkey. The Crimea itself is highly detailed but the remaining parts are supposedly less detailed. From the screenshots I've seen the terrain and aircraft graphics are simply stunning. Look out for its release next month.

The hot topic is **Jane's A-10 Warthog** which is still planned for a third quarter release this year. The game will have two campaigns, the first being Operation Restless Tiger, which is



a Korean-based "ramp-up" campaign designed to familiarise you with the plane's systems. You'll fly about 30 missions over the course of the campaign, and by the time you reach the end of the campaign you should have the aircraft and its systems mastered.

The second campaign, Operation Valiant Hunter, takes place during a hypothetical East German/Russian invasion in the Fulda Gap region of Germany during the mid-1980s. Here you will need all your skills to undertake tank busting missions, along with search and rescue, close air support, suppression of enemy air defences, and joint attacks with helicopters. Forward Air Control (FAC) missions will also have you searching for targets and then calling in helicopters and "fast-movers" to take them out.

Jane's A-10 looks as if it can stand up to the new realism standards set by **Falcon 4.0**. However, the big downer with A-10 is that the first campaign will be linear rather than Dynamic. While the lack of a dynamic campaign will annoy more experienced sim pilots, the ramp-up campaign will be welcomed by casual and new sim pilots, and the randomness and wide branching of the second campaign should offer quite a bit of replayability. I hope they change their intentions later this year to make both campaigns dynamic, and a truly memorable game!

Finally, check out the **F4** web site at www.falcon4.com for any patches and ensure you select only US patches, because the UK version has not been shipped to Australia. Good Hunting!

Sports

Gareth Jones

No, really, I'm determined to maintain this as a forum for all sports, not just football (and by that I mean real football, i.e. with a round ball), but there's a couple of things that are quite exciting on the football front, so we'll just get them out of the way nice and quickly, shall we?

Championship Manager 3, the latest in the best ever series of management sims will have been released by the time you read this - at least in the UK. There was only a tentative release date for Australasia at the time of going to press, but with a bit of luck you should be able to pop down to your local store and pick up a copy. Trust me, if you like football management sims, then you won't be disappointed. It's unlikely that a



demo version will be released, but it is definite that you will be able to LAN play the game across a network (so Kali will be an option), which is fantastic news.

OK, enough football stuff, onto other sports. Codemasters' **Shane Warne Cricket** (known elsewhere as **Brian Lara Cricket**); Now, I've seen an alpha PC version as well as the final PSX version, and it really does look to be the best simulation of cricket ever, even if it does carry the tubby gamblers name...

But if you're enjoy fisticuffs then you'll probably have heard of Prince Naseem. For those of you that haven't, he's a pommie lad who currently holds the WBO Featherweight belt, and has a rather huge reputation for outlandish comments about his abilities. Codemasters reckon they can bring out the beauty and grace of boxing anyway, in '**Prince Naseem Boxing**', with frame character models comprised of around 800 polygons each, and a character manipulation system they're calling 'Dynamic Node Skeleton Animation' which allows for ultra-realistic body and individual joint movement. Perhaps most interestingly of all, there's also going to be an option to play as a manager in the 'World career game', which could be kinda fun.

But it wouldn't be a sports sim column without some mention of EA, and though they have been fairly quiet of late, they've just announced that Baseball's 1988 MVP, Sammy Sosa, will be their spokesman (read: his name will be on the box) for the upcoming **Triple Play 2000**.

STARS! SUPERNOVA

The creator of one of the most popular turn based strategy titles takes time out to chat with fellow freak Ashton Mills

From a shareware gem to a commercial classic, Stars! has come a long way. We chat with Jeff McBride about where it came from, where it is now and where it's going.

Stars! Where it all began

AM First off, the obvious question: How did you originally become involved in the space strategy genre?

JM Out of frustration. My friends and I were looking for a game to play on the LAN at work during lunch, after hours and at odd moments throughout the day. We tried an uncountable number of retail and shareware games and couldn't find anything that we liked. For example, we tried Warlords for a while but quickly tired of the sequential turns and lack of LAN support.

Eventually we came to the conclusion that, in order to get what we wanted, we would have to write it ourselves.

AM And what were the driving forces behind the creation of Stars!?

JM Variety, balance, security and speed. We wanted a game that had nearly infinite replayability, no single "best" strategy, an encrypted file format without any cheats or hacks and a way to limit the amount of micro-management that was required of the player.

A lot of the design just fell out of trying to satisfy our criteria. The map had to be randomly generated and different for every game. Players had to be able to design their own races using a point system like a role playing game in order to ensure balance.

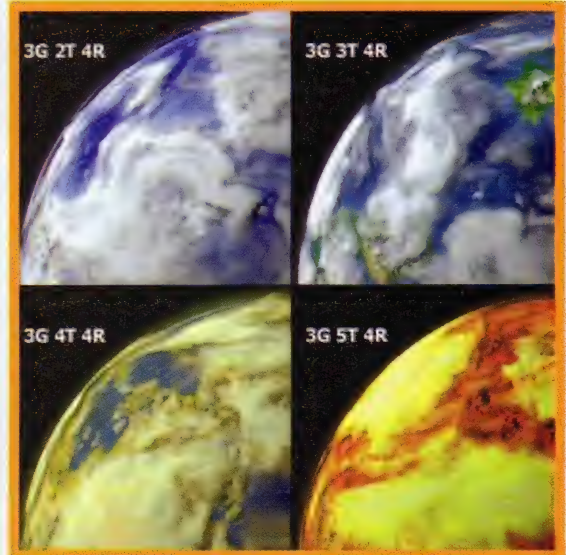
The game had to allow you to give many years worth of instructions to your colonies and fleets so that you didn't have to visit everything you owned every single turn.

One of our pet peeves about most exploration and expansion games is that, as your empire grows, the amount of time you have to spend mucking with the units you control seems to increase exponentially. We wanted to flatten that curve. We wanted to make turns in the mid to end game phases take no more time for the player than turns in the early stages of the game.



Jeff McBride in his natural form. No wonder he's fond of galactic conquest games.





(top) Every race has its own emblem and ship types, wonderfully coloured in the player's choice of color. There are 650 ship types in Stars! Supernova, at least 40 per race type.

(above) The original Stars! displayed a static graphic of planets. Stars! Supernova introduces dynamically changing images that reflect the status of a planet — as you terraform to improve habitability, the look of the planet will change accordingly.

choose not to go, there are plenty of good ideas out there. We have Stars! 2.7j in beta test right now which includes new command line

parameters to make automatic hosting of Internet games easier and more robust. These changes are the direct result of feedback from a host who is currently running 80 simultaneous games.

AM> Back to popularity, did the shareware model work well for you?

JM> After several years of bringing Stars! version 0.13c and 0.24e and so on to work, between 50 and 100 of our coworkers were playing Stars! on a regular basis. Our friends started asking us if we intended to sell Stars! because it was something that they would be willing to pay money for. We thought about it for a while, and with some encouragement from a good friend who had a shareware game on the market himself, we decided to turn Stars! into a

AM> Did you expect Stars! to become as popular as it has?

JM> Considering that, originally, we had no intention of ever selling it, I suppose you could say that we were surprised. We worked on Stars! for several years for our own amusement and the amusement of our friends. We nearly decided to stop when the original Master of Orion came out. It was obvious that they had played many of the same games that we had played and had come to many of the same conclusions. We didn't agree with all of their decisions but it was much closer to what we were looking for than anything else on the market. If MOO had been multiplayer we probably would have played it happily and never finished Stars!.

The biggest surprise for us was the number of people who wanted to play Stars! by email. It

never would have occurred to us that there would be people who would want to play only one turn a day. Stars! was designed for LAN play. In a typical LAN game turns take an average of about 5 minutes. A day or more between turns seemed insane. Ah well, it turned out that Stars! isn't too bad for email play. The files are all quite small and suitably compressed and encrypted.

AM> Has player input shaped Stars!?

JM> Immensely. Stars! has gone through innumerable revisions over the years and a fair number of the changes have been at the request of the players. The Stars! player community is large and very vocal. While many of the suggestions are either beyond the scope of a 2.x level patch or would take us in a direction we

Features

Of course, we all want a feature list to drool over. So I asked Jeff to summarise just a few, and this is what he supplied:

- Over 600 unique, exotic ships rendered in lush detail
- Scores of luscious alien portraits
- An interface that's elegant, integrated, and intuitive
- Superb battle engine
- Detailed research model
- New economic model
- Scenario Editor
- Battle Simulator
- Gazette published every year with news, rumours, tips and anonymous messages from other players
- Beacons for marking your territory
- Pirates you can actually negotiate with
- The Mystery Trader has gotten quite interesting in the last 1400 years
- Did we mention spies?
- Y2K compliant. Heh heh



product. At that time, Stars! was multiplayer only, included only artwork that I had drawn myself and had absolutely no documentation. In order to make Stars! a viable shareware product we added the tutorial and computer opponents, and contracted out the artwork and documentation.

We were one of the earliest companies selling software directly over the Internet. Stars!

was ideal for electronic distribution because all of the documentation was online and the entire game zipped down to under 1.5 meg. Selling Stars! as shareware was a satisfying process and, for us, the only reasonable way to get into the market.

When we made the deal with Empire Interactive to turn Stars! into a retail product we were thinking ahead to the next major

version (which has become Stars! Supernova). We've always had a vision for where we wanted Stars! to go and the next step was incompatible with electronic distribution. In fact, like many new games, Stars! Supernova will require two CDs.

AM Will Stars! be replaced completely by Stars!

Supernova, or will the two games retain their own identity?

JM Stars! Supernova is a sequel to Stars!. It is an extension of the original Stars! story, set 1400 years after Stars!. A lot has changed in that time. While Stars! Supernova shares a common heritage with Stars! and our current customer base will find many familiar elements, Stars! Supernova is, in essence, a whole new game. Stars! and Stars! Supernova will coexist quite happily on your computer.

The long awaited sequel, Stars! Supernova:

AM Information on Stars! Supernova is scarce out on the galactic Web. What's so different about Stars! Supernova?

JM Compared to Stars! or to the rest of the genre? From the very beginning we had an idea of what we wanted out of a multiplayer turn based strategy game. The various iterations of Stars! were all attempts to try to reach that goal. After many years of honing and polishing we came to the conclusion that it was necessary to take two steps back and

three steps sideways before going on. The basic economic and resource model in Stars! was too limiting. No matter which race you design, no matter which strategy you pick, the player with the largest economy nearly always wins.

We got tired of reading discussions on the newsgroup about calculating the second derivative of your population growth curve to maximize your economic growth. That's not what we had in mind when we designed Stars!. The bean counters had taken over. Players were finding that they had fewer viable race designs than we had originally intended. Races that were not optimized for maximum economic growth were at a serious disadvantage. Differences in economic scale far outweighed any other consideration.

Stars! Supernova takes place after the "Bean Counter Wars" and subsequent dark ages are over. Resource management is a much smaller part of your life. As the Emperor of your people, your job is to make strategic

Online Info

Information about Stars! and Stars! Supernova can be found at the Stars! Web page
<http://www.webmap.com/stars!>

Never played Stars!? Where have you been? Check out some of these fan sites to get the inside information:

Stars! Autohost

<http://library.southern.edu/stars/stars.htm>

Stars-r-us

<http://members.aol.com/omonubi/stars-r-us.html>

Orionian Empire

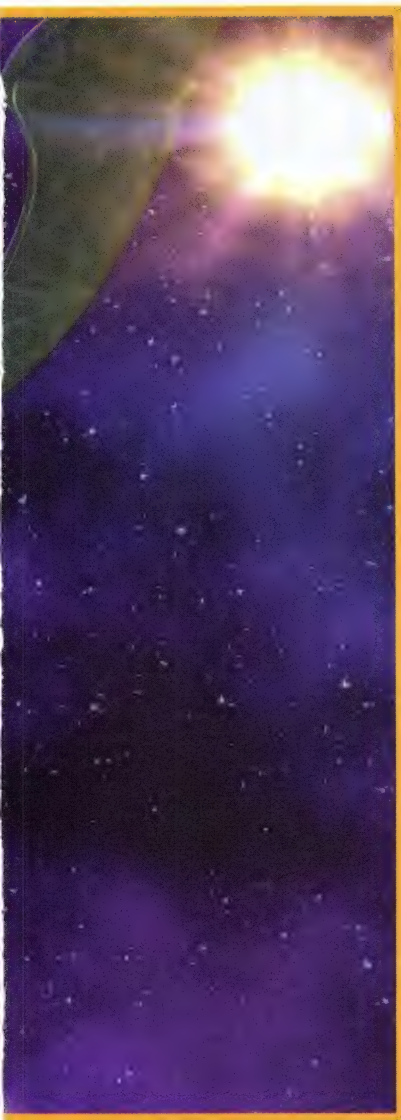
<http://home.columbus.rr.com/orionian/>

Mystery Guild

<http://www.grigzy.com/mysteryguild/>

The Keep

<http://www.manacled.demon.co.uk/stars/>



decisions about expansion, trade, diplomacy, espionage and war. There are many ways to play and many ways to win.

AM> What features are unique to Stars! Supernova compared to other games in the genre?

JM> Stars! Supernova has much more sophisticated diplomacy and espionage features.



(left) The graphics in Stars! Supernova are far removed from its predecessor. (above) Ever wondered how ugly you looked playing Stars!? Well, now you know.

Diplomatic options run from attacking on sight to sharing nearly everything - including your economies. Spies are individual units with their own personalities and skills that improve over time. Where you may control thousands of fleets and hundreds of colonies, you'll never have more than perhaps a dozen spies even in a large game. A single spy, in the right place, at the right time and with the right orders, can do more than a score of fleets.

Stars! Supernova will pull the player into the game universe better than other space strategy games currently on the market. There are many features designed to encourage and assist players who want to "role play" their race. For example, game history, from the perspective of your race, is recorded for you in a publishable format.

AM> Tell me more about the background story.

JM> It is the year 3600. Your race is just emerging from a seven century long dark age. Once you ruled the galaxy, or at

least a large part of it. Your war fleets crushed all opposition. Your colonists went where you wanted, when you wanted. Your rich merchant fleets found ports in every sector. Number crunchers ran the show, though, and it wasn't long before the whole operation collapsed under its own weight.

But that was a long, long time ago. This time around, a self-proclaimed guild of free traders would like to handle all your intra-galactic shipping and banking needs. In fact, they insist on it. Mysterious alien caravans offer information and advanced technology to anyone who answers their call, in a sort of first-come, first-served cultural exchange.

A key government official turns out to be an alien spy. Your neighbours probably know more about you than you'd like. Of course, you know one or two things about them, too. Maybe it's time for an alliance? On top of all that, you discover that your sun is going supernova in approximately 60 years. You have that long to find new

homes for all your people. But your people insist on choosing the colonies to which they'll emigrate. It's up to you to find or make the worlds that'll draw them out of the solar system. Problem is, there are other races doing the same thing.

And that's just the tutorial scenario.

AM> Will Stars! Supernova be the ultimate space strategy all space strategists have been hoping for?

JM> Gee, I hope not. Trying to be all things to all people is the surest recipe for disaster. We're hoping that many strategy gamers will enjoy Supernova and, who knows, some player might think of it as the "ultimate" space strategy game. For us, Stars! Supernova, is one more, large, step towards our goal.

AM> Will there be a demo version for Stars! fans to drool over?

JM> Absolutely. It will not be as full featured as the demo for Stars! is today. Multi-CD demos just aren't practical. The Stars! Supernova demo will, however, be a playable game and not just a slideshow.

AM> When is it likely to be released?

JM> Stars! Supernova is scheduled for release in Q4 '99.

AM> Lastly, what do you envisage as the ultimate space strategy game, what features would it have, how would it play and when might it materialise?

JM> Stars! Online will be available in about 5 years.



AUSTRALIAN CRICKET CAPTAIN

Boony! Boony! Bring back Boooooony!

Category Cricket
Management sim

Players 1

Publisher Empire Interactive

Available Now-ish

Yes, yes, the more observant amongst you will have already noticed that this bears a striking resemblance to International Cricket Captain, which we reviewed a few months back. Well, there's a reason for that, you see this is essentially the same game, it's just been Australianised. See, now don't say we didn't tell you that an Australian version was in the works, because it was mentioned in the review. If you've gone out and bought yourself a copy of the English County cricket series, then there's no need to feel too bad - after all, Boony is in that version too...

No, but seriously, if you are a cricket fan then you really should consider this, cos it's just tops. It's not like Shane Warne's Cricket (which will be reviewed next issue, by the way), which could be considered an arcade simulation - this is almost pure management anality. You'll be wading through statistics on run rates, bowling averages, test performances, run rates, and so much more. This is not a criticism though - far far from it. If you like cricket, then the chances would have to be good that you're not averse to taking in a statistic or two, or perhaps you'd consider yourself a fanatic cricket follower, in which case you'd be the one droning on about Steve Waugh's ODI average on Australian soil when facing Ambrose during a really great party to someone that's you're trying to pick up. I know I do. Anyway, I've digressed, embarrassingly so. Back to it!

Australian Cricket Captain, then. You don't sit there with a control pad in hand trying to predict whether the AI is going to bowl you a googly or a wrong'un and then rapidly hitting button B. Instead, you take the game at your own pace, be that a Sheffield Shield game or a mercantile Cup game - and yes, that



means that the main section of the game is for the oft-deprecated domestic league. And yes, this means that there's only 6 (or possibly 7...) teams competing in the comp, which is far less than the English County version of the game. But still, there should be enough variety of competition to keep you interested, especially if the national team actually plays games for their states in the computer version, as opposed to real life.

And if you don't think that's enough, Empire have managed to rope in some local talent for the commentary to replace the English commentary icon Jonathan Agnew. None other than he-who-will-never-be-satisfied-no-matter-how-well-they-do, Ian 'Chappelli' Chappell has taken

over the microphone, so it's his dulcet (and usually unhappy) tones that will be piping out of the speakers as you decide whether to give McGrath another over before resting him or to bring on MacGill, the latest boy wonder.

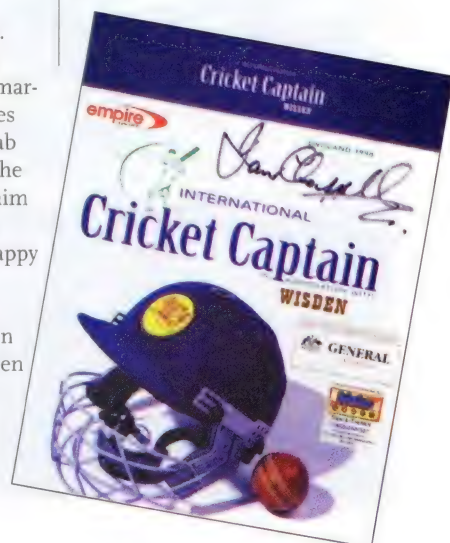
Ooooh, and late breaking news just in - the absolutely marvellous people at Metro Games have been kind enough to grab Chappelli as he came out of the recording studio, and made him autograph a few game boxes (apparently, he wasn't very happy about the timing of his pen strokes, though). Anyway, it looks fine to us, and if you can answer the question below then you'll be receiving your very own copy of the Australian version of the game, with Chappelli's autograph on the



box - and we've only got one to give away too. It's all happening!

Q. From all the current International players across the world, create your World XI

Send the correct answer on the back of an envelope to
'Cricket is life',
78 Renwick St Redfern,
NSW, 2016

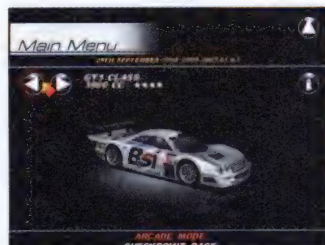


Grand Touring



Category Arcade Racing
Players 1-8 (TCP/IP, IPX)
Publisher Empire Interactive
Available Very soon

Here is a game for all the amateur racers out there who barely know how to change a tyre, let alone about the finer points of engine tweaking and gear ratio whosafudge. While Grand Prix Legends and Johnny Herbert's Grand Prix prove that the F1 simulation is reborn, Empire Interactive have given us a new arcade racer, an entirely different beast. Grand Touring is a jump-in-away-we-go affair that includes none of the fancy car setup and maintenance features of its simulation cousins,



thank you very much. It's all about how far your foot is to the floor and what colour your car is - cos red's the fastest, right?

But seriously, Grand Touring looks to be a class act. As you'd expect, you'll have a selection of 8 suitably fast cars: Club-man Sports, GT1 and others, including 2 secret models, and a plethora of tracks to race them on. There will be various choices as far as the style of race is concerned, including an arcade style checkpoint race, training and single race. Also included are the obligatory weather variations: rain, snow, and fine as well as night racing. All the standard features are there, it's easy to use and likely to be an impressive title.



Although the racing wasn't fast and furious on this preview copy, if Grand Touring lives up to its advertising, which promis-

es the fastest PC racing yet (a pretty big claim!), this could be a racer and a half. Since we all know that these games live or die on the quality of the racing, it will be interesting to see what comes up. According to Metro Games, Grand

Touring should be available by the time you read this, so keep an eye out for a full review soon.

John Dewhurst

RollerCoaster Tycoon

Category Amusement park sim
Players 1
Publisher Hasbro
Available TBA

Gamers of the world really owe a lot to Sim City. This classic title created a whole new genre of gaming; the I'm-the-king/mayor/manager-of-this-place-and-I'll-build-whatever-the-hell-I-want simulation. Subsequent variations have included Theme Park and Theme Hospital. The latest grandchild of the simulation family is arriving soon: Hasbro Interactive's RollerCoaster Tycoon.

RollerCoaster Tycoon will remind the experienced gamer of Theme Park. In a similar fashion you are in control of an amusement park, which means putting up rides and attractions. It also means supplying food stands and toilets, for the convenience of your guests; employing mechanics to maintain rides; and cleaners to pick up after your thank-



less grubby little patrons! Through research and good management the tycoon will be able to build new and remarkable varieties of rides, most importantly the roller coaster!

The programmer and creator is Chris Sawyer, of Transport Tycoon fame. Chris made RollerCoaster Tycoon with a simple aim: that the main enjoy-

ment of the game comes from the design and construction of roller coasters. The game interface is extremely easy to use and the options for construction of individual roller coasters are almost endless. Roller coasters can have corkscrews, vertical loops and in-line twists, and providing funds permit, you can build absolute behemoths!



Sure, it is essentially a silly concept, but who hasn't wanted to create their own Rollercoaster at one time or another?

Watching your little roller coaster passengers shoot around the track screaming their little heads off is absolutely brilliant! While the emphasis is on construction, the gameplay is definitely NOT lacking. The pursuit of a happy, healthy (and wealthy) park makes this a really great game.

The version here at PowerPlay is all but a final release and it looks fantastic. There doesn't look to be the possibility of riding your own roller coaster, which is about the only thing more you'd want. Take a good look, cos RollerCoaster Tycoon should be out real soon.

John Dewhurst

Rollcage

Category Racing
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Psygnosis
Available 2nd Qtr '99

This game is insane. Utterly, utterly insane. To begin with there are the cars. Each vehicle is kitted out with a set of massive tyres that dwarf the actual body of the car itself, while the driver is seated in a tiny pod-like cockpit. What this means is that you can drive them upside down. There's no roof or floor as such, so if you flip over you can just keep on racing.

In the demo I played, there is a large building with a tunnel underneath. Drive into the tunnel then up the wall and you'll be driving on the ceiling. Exit the tunnel and, since there's no more ceiling, you drop back onto the road and again keep on racing! Hmm, but surely the wheels would be turning the wrong way? Ah, yes, but realistic physics wouldn't have let you onto the ceiling in the first place. It's mad-



Driving upside-down in a console inspired mayhem scenario fill you with joy? Prepare to get happy

ness, I tell you. Not that there's anything wrong with that...

Now take a look at those power-ups and weapons. Missiles flying overhead constantly sending skyscrapers crashing to the ground and opponents' cars tumbling into the air. Destroy great chunks of the landscape and watch huge boulders tear a pathway of extreme flatness down the road. And beware the thing that sends the screen all purple and wobbly. Tsk, this is just crazy.

Compare Rollcage to Carmageddon - without the gore, but with twice the carnage. This is Twisted Metal on steroids, souped-up and ready to burn. Or explode, whichever comes first. Utterly, utterly, UTTERLY insane. I think I like it a lot!

David Wildgoose

Silver

Category Adventure/RPG
Players 1
Publisher Infogrames
Available 1st Qtr '99

Hey, where did this come from? Or rather, how could Infogrames have kept this potential rival to Final Fantasy a secret for so long? It's due next month and this is the first I've heard of it. Lucky I like surpris-



es, especially when they look this good.

Similar in style and ambition to Squaresoft's FF series, Silver is a game that borrows from both adventure and RPG tradition. The interface is the typical point-and-click and the gameplay places emphasis on both combat



and telling an epic story. You will have a choice of five characters, although the main hero is called David (I just know that's going to spook me out when I play the final version) and you can control any or all of the others throughout the game. Silver is also the name of the terrible, and terribly mad, sorcerer who has - in a plot twist of Duke Nukem lineage - decided to kidnap every female in the world. Thus, it's been left up to David to get them back - shouldn't be too hard, I expect, going on past personal experience.

Another epic fantasy RPG, oh joy!

Locations seem varied and abundant - over 300, apparently, taking in castles, caves, forests, towns, etc - and there are plenty of characters to interact with. Distinctly cool-looking are the dramatic, FF meets Ecstatica camera views and the wide array of spellcasting special effects. It must be said, Silver is visually gorgeous. Yeah, I know we're all sick of fantasy-flavoured RPGs, but I think in this case we might have to make an exception.

David Wildgoose

Loose Cannon

Category Action/Adventure
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Digital Anvil
Available 3rd Qtr 99

Loose Cannon is one of the most keenly awaited titles due out from developers Digital Anvil (you know, the company Chris Roberts set up with all that money he made from those Wing Commander FMV serials). Although not directly developed by the man himself, Loose Cannon is the brainchild of Tony Zurovec, who was responsible for the action classics *Crusader: No Remorse* and *Crusader: No Regret*.

Loose Cannon promises to take the basic essence of the *Crusader* series and load this with the most intricate and damned exciting game features seen in the genre. Where *Crusader* was a glorious yet simple exercise of blasting your way through the levels, Loose Cannon is a fantastically more complex affair.



You play the part of a bounty hunter named Ashe whose ultimate goal is to chase down Bishop, the leader of a mass crime syndicate that has gotten in your way. Of course, you've (naturally) got a massive arsenal at your disposal. Your most useful includes your car, which can be upgraded a la Activision's *Interstate* series. Detail is such that there are many ways of finishing any set mission by taking either the sneaky route or the most obvious. Keeping to the mercenary theme, there's no pre-scripted path to the end game sequence. Rather, you pick the missions that you feel would best serve at the moment.

Set in the future, Loose Cannon's environments are



decidedly more contemporary than the flash and almost clinical types featured in the *Crusader* series. While a lot of the action takes place within the city limits, LC also takes you out to the country, with 12 distinct areas. Visually, LC is beautiful and detailed - which is nothing surprising considering the pedigree. In game character movement utilised motion capture, giv-

ing this massively detailed world that extra boost - resulting in what should be a thoroughly immersive experience. More soon.



Total Annihilation - Kingdoms

Category RTS
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Cavedog
Available Mid '99

We all know how nutty the gaming world went over *Total Annihilation*. High accolades, stacks of sales and plenty of satisfied gamers surrounded the title. How come more people are still playing *StarCraft* then? Most will argue that TA suffered from a lack of discernible variety in the units, and that there was no real plot - which are two things *StarCraft* excelled at.

Not just an answer to the popular *StarCraft*, *Kingdoms* is a fantastic evolution of TA - keeping the basics, yet introducing a whole swag of new features that promises to give much joy to fans of the genre. If they can stomach the new setting, that is.

Rather than the mecha-bot futuristic setting of TA, *Kingdoms* features a heavy fantasy/ancient earth feel. More than



just window dressing, the fantasy element has changed the way TAK will play in comparison to TA. There are no resources to collect. Replacing the ores and minerals of TA in TAK is mana. Mana is the fuel of TAK, being the stuff that creates units and buildings, as well as being the requirement for the many spells



featured in the game. Mana permeates the entire game world, and is in high concentration around "sacred sites", so finding and controlling these sites becomes a priority.

There are four "forces" in TAK, each representing the four forces of nature - earth, wind,



With gameplay modelled on the ever popular TA, along with features from other RTS heavyweights, TA:K looks a winner

fire and water. Each force has particular and unique units, and more importantly - valuable units. TAK features a veteran unit system which was implemented with the hope that tank rush strategies would become less appealing to players.

TAK will feature just under fifty single player missions, and this will require the player to master each of the four armies provided, as well as allowing for a detailed story to be integrated. TAK may well give the upcoming *Tiberian Sun* a run for it's money.

THE LONGEST JOURNEY

Philosophical dilemmas, a Blade Runner-esque scenario mixed with old school fantasy makes David a very excited boy

Category Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Funcom
Available Mid '99

Imagine, just for a moment, that in some kind of deranged flight of fancy you decided to crossbreed Westwood's Blade Runner with Sierra's King's Quest. Existential cyber-noir meets mystical fantasy? Nah, it's just never going to work, is it?

Okay, if you'll bear with me for a little longer, I'll try it again from another angle. Imagine a future world, a sci-fi dystopia of decaying cities drenched in chrome and neon. Imagine, simultaneously, another world, one that is lush and beautiful with green, green forests and heart-melting sunsets. Now imagine them both within the very same game. There, that's The Longest Journey for you.

Let's look at the details. You play April, an eighteen year old girl who fancies herself as a bit of an artist. She looks kinda like Lucy from Blade Runner, albeit with different coloured hair. She leaves home - well, runs away from home, more like - to attend art school in Venice. Not Venice, Italy, but a simulated new Venice located in the cyber-punk world of Stark in which April lives. Somewhere along



Hey, wait a second, that's Natalie Imbruglia! Look out, Nat!

the way, however, she realises that the fantastic world she has been dreaming about and recreating in her art is actually a real place called Arcadia. And, more amazingly still, she can also travel between these two worlds thanks to her latent ability as a "shifter".

Sounds an intriguing scenario, if only because of the philosophical dilemmas it raises. Which world is reality? Is there anything that can be called reali-



ty? How do you know when you're dreaming? How do you know you even exist? For me at least, it's exciting to see a computer game embrace such high-minded questions. What will be even more impressive is if Funcom can formulate a great adventure to go with it. They have a headstart with the plot, that's for sure.

In terms of the gameplay mechanics, The Longest Journey appears a mixture of tradition and innovation. Most obviously, there is the striking visual side of the equation. Adopting a typical third-person perspective, the game scenes are presented in a manner reminiscent of the aforementioned Blade Runner, Grim Fandango or even Resident Evil. This is emphasised by the wonderfully detailed characters. Each are created using polygons to achieve a genuine 3D effect and don't suffer from the messy pixellation that plagued Blade Runner. The backdrops, as you can see, are similarly excellent.



The interface will please traditionalists, in that it is entirely mouse-based. Verb icons abound and conversations consist of numerous dialogue choices displayed across the bottom of the screen.

After a few lean years where adventure games seemed to slide closer and closer to mere puzzle collections, the likes of Grim Fandango, Nightlong, the forthcoming Gabriel Knight III, and now The Longest Journey are staging a coup to reinstate story-based adventures as the genre's rightful rulers. I wish them all the best of luck.

David Wildgoose

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE THE GREATEST GOLFER OF THE CENTURY?

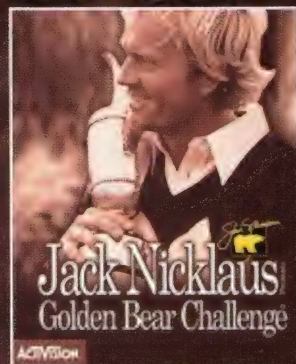
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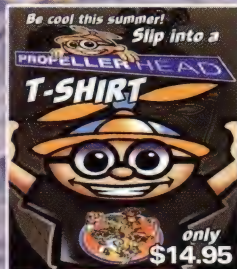
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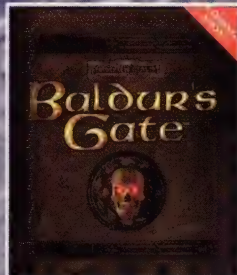
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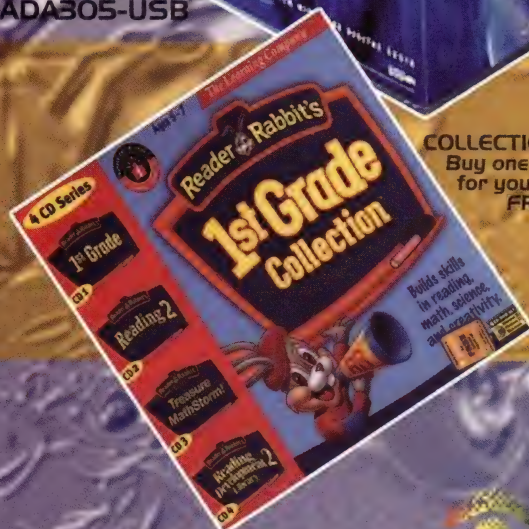
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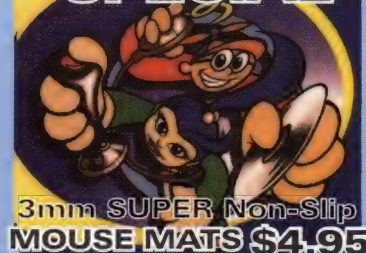
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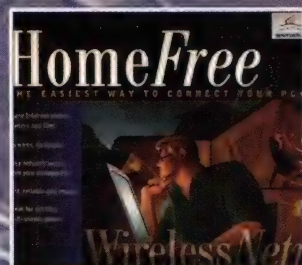
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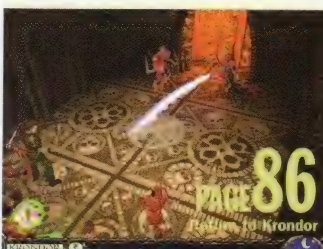
Sierra releases Kings Quest 8 and we all wonder when it will all end. Activision's Heretic 2 proves that the 'Lara View' can actually work in a game. EA hit us with AFL 99 and New South Welshmen pretend it isn't happening. Monolith finally ship Blood 2 and we all wonder why it's a big stinky mess compared with their own and brilliant Shogo MAD. Sierra also ship Viper Racing, claiming it's based on the Grand Prix Legends engine, anyone who has played Grand Prix legends knows this to be

utter bollocks. Everyone releases several flight sims each and Major Ian's spare time hits the negatives. Sierra (yep, them) let us Return to Krondor - something nobody dreamed of after playing the prequel.

And a few more games here and there. That's the month of gaming and we're hovering in-between joy and boredom. At least by reading the following pages you'll know which is which, and all will be well in your gaming world. You'll see.

Ben Mansill
Editor

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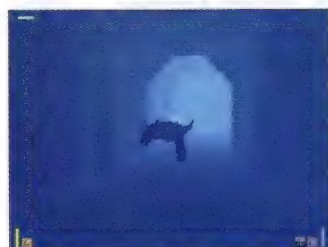


THE PC POWERPLAY SCORING SYSTEM

95%+	PLATINUM The Best. Virtually faultless, reserved for games which cause loss of sleep from thinking of nothing else.
90-94%	GOLD A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre, or a ground breaking game that'll be setting trends.
80-90%	A strong, eminently playable game. Hard to fault and likely to still be on the hard drive in 6 month's time.
60-80%	Competent and generally enjoyable. Flaws or mediocrity hold these games back from higher ratings.
40-60%	Average and ordinary. Not bad, not good. Ideal gift.
0-40%	Bad, really bad. Boring, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible.

HERETIC II

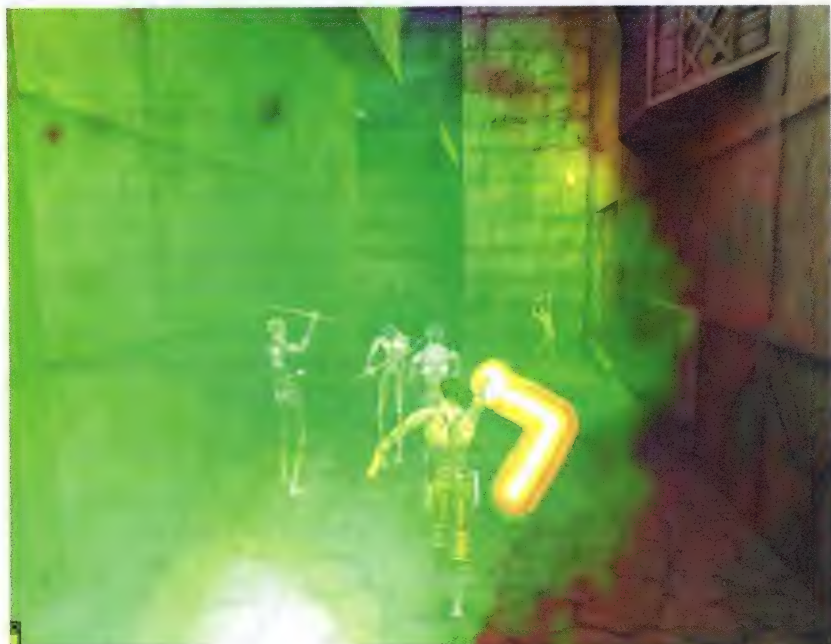
Don't let the third person 'Lara' perspective leave you feeling forlorn, Heretic 2 offers much more than Lara ever could



No, it's not Hexen III, Heretic II is the sequel to the original Heretic, a game built on the Doom engine. Heretic II sees you controlling the action over the shoulder of Corvus, the Sidhe Elf from the original game. The storyline picks up where Heretic left off, and in case you can't remember

that far back you get a nice movie at the beginning to remind you. After defeating D'Sparil, Corvus is banished to the outer worlds until he is teleported back to his homeland of Parthoris, only to find his brethren infected with a plague. Corvus himself becomes infected, and his quest becomes to cure himself and his people.

Not only usable as weapons, the spells also brighten up the occasionally dull colour schemes of Heretic 2



Controversy!

The most controversial aspect of this game would have to be the 3rd person perspective. Raven took a gamble in going 3rd person only, but it has paid off - after about 10 minutes of playing you barely notice that you are in 3rd person mode. You can actually play Heretic II in 1st person mode if you just can't deal with staring at Corvus' ass for the whole game by going to the console, but it really

does detract significantly. It also removes your peripheral vision, making it harder to see enemies to either side of you.

Offense/Deefense

Heretic II features green and blue mana as in the previous games. This time the green mana is used for offensive spells, and the blue mana for defensive spells. Yes, you heard right, defense. As well as the regular fireballs and the like, Corvus can also cast spells that protect him from foes. Use them in combination and the baddies had better find another pointy-eared foe to mess with.

Acrobatic death

Corvus has some rocking moves, and the range of anima-



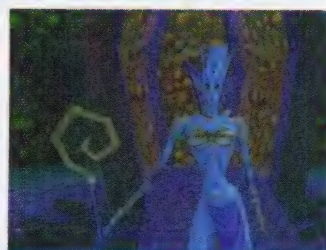
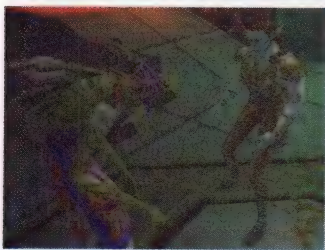
General Health Warning:
9 out of 10 dinner parties end up this way. Even if they didn't eat the Salmon mousse

Clearly; objectives

The inclusion of a map is a change from the norm where 3D worlds have made it difficult to map. True, the map is a 2D bit of parchment, but it really helps when you're stuck rather than just putting a fist through the monitor in an attempt to solve your problems. Objectives are also listed on a piece of parchment so you can remember whose ass you have to whup next.

What's wrong with it?

Heretic II does have its flaws, though they are not critical ones. Graphically, the game is a bit of a disappointment. The architecture is rudimentary at best, with many of the walls being a shade of brown, which gave me Quake shivers all over again. Most levels



tion is very impressive. As well as the usual ducking and jumping, there are rolls, pole-vaults, creeping, walking, running and climbing. Corvus can also use his staff in a number of ways including the regular slash, spinning slash and the pole-vault-into-the-chest trick. Heretic II also features location specific damage which is rapidly becoming the norm in action games. A good thing this, because a slice to the head will decapitate, or you can get really medieval and cut off an opponent's arms then slap them until they faint.

Finally - smart camera

3rd person perspective? Climbing? Pole-vaulting? I know you're thinking this is Tomb Raider with some bloke with spells, but Heretic II kicks Lara's proverbial when it comes to control. TR is so clumsy compared to Heretic II that you just don't ever want to play a TR game again, even if Lara is prettier to ogle than Corvus. The camera implementation is absolutely brilliant - it almost never clips, stutters or just generally jerks you around so much that you can't tell up from down.

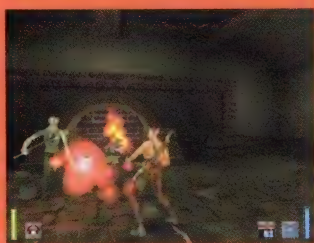


Do they hurt?

OK, so there aren't 32,000 weapons in *Heretic II* like most other shooters, but in true *Heretic/Hexen* style, the weapons and spell effects and the way they are implemented more than make up for the lack of variety.

Weapons

You start the game with a **Durhnwood Staff** (a stick with a blade) which increases in power during the game as you find power-ups for it. At close range, this weapon kicks ass and allows you to dismember foes in rather interesting ways. As an added bonus, this weapon requires no mana or ammo.



Next is the **Hellstaff**, a rod that rapidly fires balls of red stuff that hurts. The Hellstaff uses Hellorbs for ammo. The **Storm Bow** fires Storm Arrows which create a storm on impact that rains acid and burns the bejesus out of any hapless foe that walks into it. Finally, the **Phoenix Bow** fires Phoenix Arrows that explode on impact - read: medieval Rocket Launcher.

Offensive Spells

As well as weapons you have five spells which can cause pain. All offensive spells use green mana.

At the start of the game you know only the **Fireball** spell, which is not as powerful as it sounds. It fires small balls of fire at your enemies and it takes quite a few to kill anything. It can be used without mana, but it dishes out less hurt.



The first spell you come across is the **Thunder blast**. This baby fires 5 or so purple balls that spread out. It's great for wiping out multiple foes in front of you, or get up close and personal and unleash on some poor sucker.

Next up is the **Firewall** which, as the name suggests, casts a wall of fire out from Corvus. Any beastie that is caught in the blaze will keep burning until they are medium-rare.

The **Sphere of Annihilation** is a cool spell that lobbs a sphere to the ground in front of Corvus that explodes and damages anything inside it. Hold the fire button down for increased damage.

The final spell is **Iron Doom**, which fires a spiked ball at your foes which then explodes and fires shards out in all directions. Very handy for room clearance, just make sure you're not in the room.

Defensive Spells

Defensive spells are a new addition to the *Heretic/Hexen* family of games, but they work extremely well. Defensive spells can be cast at the same time as Offensive spells and they all use blue mana.



The **Tome of Power**, although not a defensive spell as such, increases the power of your weapons. The **Ring of Repulsion** emits a ring of blue energy outwards from Corvus that repels any foes around him - good when you're surrounded. **Meteor Swarm** produces four glowing meteors that spin around Corvus and then launch at a foe if one starts attacking - in conjunction with an offensive spell or weapon, this combination can take out most foes. Back from *Heretic* is the **Morph Ovum**, a spell which turns your enemies into chickens, naturally. In deathmatch there is a random possibility that your foe will be turned into the Super Chicken, which has 999 health and does 999 damage with each peck. **Lightning shield** is similar to Meteor Swarm, but your foes are struck by lightning when they approach you. Finally, **Teleport** also makes a return from *Heretic*, once again whizzing you off to a safe place if you're about to die.



The funky chicken. Laugh if you dare - this may be the bringer of Gristly Death Super Funky Chicken From The Bowels Of Hell. Prepare to be pecked to oblivion!

are also very blocky, with not a lot of attention to detail. It's not a very difficult or challenging game either. The monsters are fairly easy to kill (the AI, even for the bosses, is pretty pathetic), the puzzles are absolutely basic (although we should breathe a sigh of relief after being tormented in *Heretic*, *Hexen* and *Hexen II*) and there's plenty of health and mana lying around even in the hardest difficulty setting. The levels are also fairly linear; an

improvement over the oft-confusing hubs of the previous games, although it does make the game feel much more scripted.

Big boom

Heretic II is multi-playable out of the box, being built on the Quake 2 engine and all that. Multiplayer is fun, but most games usually degenerate into a complete gibfest as the weapons are so powerful that



A duck and crawl element without a gratuitous bum shot! Joy!

PLUS+



www.hereticii.com - the unofficial website.



Heretic 2 uses an over-the-shoulder perspective AND features a respectable combat engine. It can be done! On yer bike, Lara!

Free with game - everything!

The CD comes packed with goodies including a level editor, the full .dll source for the game (in case you feel the need to hack and slash some code instead of enemies), and an 80-odd page guide explaining how to hack the source as well as a full listing of all entities, textures and everything else included in the .pak file. Very impressive stuff. The CD also comes with Gamespy Lite pre-configured for Heretic II, but it only connects to the master server in the USA so unless you are used to playing with 350+ lag, it's not much use.

Many thumbs

Double, nay triple thumbs up (if that's possible) go to Raven for producing a cleanly-coded game on deadline. This game is not rushed and it shows. It oozes quality. The first thing I did after installing the game was jump to the website to find a patch. Lo and behold, there was nothing there. Strange, I thought, Activision is usually pretty quick to bring out a patch to fix the inevitable bugs, maybe they haven't updated their webpage, I thought? But no, dear reader it's true - you install the game and you play and you do not crash. Wouldn't it be nice if all software that we as gamers payed good money for worked the first time?

George Argy



most only take a few hits to kill. 3rd person mode is also less accurate than 1st person, so you are better off firing madly in an opponent's general direction rather than taking careful aim and timing your shots. For

those who are more inclined to destroy vermin rather than your fellow elf, you can complete Corvus' quest co-operatively - good on you Raven for including this aspect of gaming that is sorely underrated.

GOLD

91%

Category 3rd person action/adventure
Players 1-32 (IPX, TCP/IP)
Publisher Activision
Price \$89.95
Rating M 15+
Available Now

For An ambitious yet complete, polished and unhurried game. Looks great, feels great, plays great.

Against Too easy and quick to complete in single-player. 3rd person perspective can be a bit fiddly at times.

Need Win9x, P166, 32MB RAM, 4xCD, 360MB Hard Drive space, Direct X

Want PII 233, 64MB RAM, 470MB HDD, Voodoo 2

3D SUPPORT

Open GL, Direct 3D is supported

AFL 99

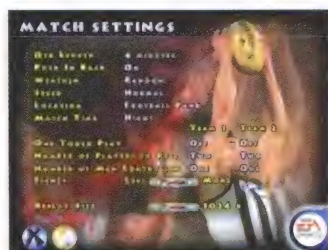
The first AFL game was great, and the sequel is even better, despite a few annoying bugs and NO MULTIPLAYER. You baaaastards!

We all grew up with EA Sports games and for most of us, they own a special place in our hearts.

Who can forget FIFA 95, where if you could get your shot for goal to curve, you were the king of the hill? The guys at EA have earned an enviable reputation, which has been proved once again by the recently released FIFA 99. So hold onto your beanies and meat pies, footy-lovers - here's what you've been waiting for: AFL 99, the newest simulation of, as far as I'm concerned, our most prized national game. Who cares that Aussie Rules was invented by cricketers to stay fit in the winter months? Who cares that Warwick Capper made a mockery of Sydney, with (and without) his tight jocks and white booties in the 1980s? The fact is that it's a huge game with a much bigger following than any of its distant northern cousins: Rugby League and Union. Regardless, we should be proud there are developers around producing world class games of not-quite-world recognised sports, such as Aussie Rules and Rugby League. We're Australians and we deserve PC conversions of our own sports!

Welcome to EA country

The thing about EA Sports team games, is that there is no chance of confusing them with any other games around. Whether it's ice hockey, soccer or Aussie Rules, there are a few things that haven't changed since the dawn of EA. The game selection menu, the team selection menu and the choice of control menu (choose a team or choose to be a spectator), are identical in a swag of EA Sports titles. But quite apart from this, the teams entering the stadium and the script perfect commentary give it away. Even the response of the players to kick or pass commands being slightly



It's all there - the rules, the players, the commentators, the movement. As Bruce would say, "Beauuuuuutiful!"

No accelerator needed

AFL 99 is installed onto your system in two versions. The first is the software version, the second the hardware accelerated version. The benefits of 3D acceleration cards have become all but standard for the modern gamer, so it's reassuring to see game developers looking after those who don't have, whilst providing the goods for those with the latest hardware on their PCs. The dif-





ference between the versions is only seen on the oval and frankly there is no great deficiency in the software version. While you get a fancy flyover at the start of matches and the figures look a little better in the hardware version, we don't see a significant increase of game speed from the software to the hardware game at all. I get the feeling they could have improved this, but we should be thankful that both games run as comfortably as they do, which is well up to par.

Sliding difficulty

You have plenty of options for style of play. You can choose to play a training match, to learn the ropes (much recommended for the inexperienced), or launch into a variety of other matches. These start with one-off exhibition and pre-season matches which have a lower difficulty level. The matches then increase in difficulty for the 22 rounds of a Premiership season and the Final 8. A nice touch is the opportunity to adjust how tough your game is for each different type of match.

Even better is that the later games cannot be reduced to pitifully easy, for all those cheaters out there. The difficulty range for the Final 8 is from hard to very hard. So people won't be able to win the Premiership unless they actually do a bit of work! Changing

the difficulty remains possible throughout a match, which is great for the flexibility offered. This is a great example of what EA do really well - give features that are easily accessible and above all USEFUL.

"Ooooooh, special!"

The most important part of any sport game is what happens on the field - regardless of all the fancy menus. The first thing you notice when you begin to actually play AFL 99 is the atmosphere. As you run onto the field, there is the roar of the crowd, sweeping camera angles (with hardware acceleration) and the voice of 7 Sport's Bruce McAvaney. To be honest, I really can't stand this guy [He's a Legend! - Ed].



Most amazing of all is that this is an EA Sports game, yet the menus are great, and the managerial options are fulsome. Incredible!

Did he ever even play a sport? Huh? At least we also have Leigh Matthews in commentary, a past great of the game, who incidentally helped in the development of the title. Putting my personal feelings aside, EA has got the authenticity down and like it or not, when you here Bruce's voice saying, "That was really special...", you know you're in the midst of televisual sport history. The game looks and feels a hell-of-a-lot like television coverage, which is good if you watch most of your footy from the couch. For the most part, this enables a clear view of the action and helps convey the excitement of play.





Knee opponents!

The gameplay is smooth and quick. I can't explain the excitement of watching your player as he bounds in and lines up a kick at goal - it's high, it's straight - does it have the legs??? I must admit I am quite taken with the excellent feel of play in AFL 99. Each time you kick a goal, you'll be waving your arms in the air and cheering wildly. Well, maybe not every time, but you get my point. The figures on the field, the players and the umpires, look great and movement is authentic. Handballing, tackling and booting the ball all look and feel very real and the brilliant marks, taken whilst kneeling on your opponent's back, are there in all their glory. Take a screamer of a mark and hear old Bruce squeal, "Ooow! Courage personified there!"

Play calling

There are various camera angles to use but what I found particularly useful, was the way the gamer is able to quickly switch from any camera angle to an over-the-shoulder view of the player with the ball. So the ball has just been bounced, your ruckman has skillfully knocked it to an open man and from his first stride, you can get right behind him and see the opposition in front of you. Arrows that surround your player indicate possible teammates to offload the ball to, or even if a kick for goal is on. At each turn of play, when you kick-out from goal after a behind or there is a ball up, you are given nifty little menus to choose the placement of players and strategy you'd like to employ. Even if you don't know what the particular formation is called, you certainly know what is going to



"Hey, wait! Come back fellas, I promise I'll bounce it for real this time! Awww fellas, come on, I was just kiddin' around! Fellas?"

happen. This really helps in the fluidity of play. Again, we have excellent features that are easily used in game. The gamer can keep the game fast and constantly moving, or slow as choice dictates. In this way, the gameplay is really excellent and for sport gamers who like lots of action this is great news.

No melee rule

AFL 99 has retained its 4-button control system. It's easy to grasp and allows you to tear your hair out over the game and not the interface - always a good thing. We still have those peculiar EA controls, that may or may not act immediately, depending on the player's movements and stride. This may cause passionate thumping of your keyboard and shouts of "kick the ball, you godless scoundrel!" and the like. As I said, this is one of those EA quirks and experience proves it's not necessarily a flaw in the game. I did feel that passing and kicking sometimes wasn't intuitive enough - I mean if there is a teammate who is a few metres away and ready for a pass, am I really going to pass the ball to the ground in front of me? However, overall it's a very effective system, that offers many and varied ways to control your team. Hilariously, there are four different controls in fight mode! I'm sure I've seen boxing games with less...

Great coaching options

The sweetest new feature in AFL 99 is the expanded formation menu. The options offered really create a managerial side of the game, giving you more control than previous AFL games. You now have an expanded squad of 42 players, so you can experiment with different line-ups in different combinations - the possibilities are endless. You can set individual positions and the boundaries of each player's position can be adjusted, in a click & drag fashion. You also have the option of using individual player instructions. A player can be set on-ball or in a particular region. You can even give players instructions about marking! Just about the only thing you can't do is to tell the players to cut their hair and stop wearing those stupid, ridiculously tight pants!





Brisbane good? Hello?

One thing I found a little strange was the fact that pretty much all the teams seem to be evenly matched in their skill ratings. Let's get serious, yeah? There are some teams that suck in any competition and while in AFL 99, this was probably done to encourage the use of all teams, it is anything but realistic. It is encouraging then that individual players are quite different in speed and skill. That's not to say that playing AFL 99 doesn't offer many kinds of teams to play as the various teams do play quite differently. Perhaps the EA updates of team statistics that I've heard tell of will offer more wide-ranging and useful figures.

No multiplayer! Nooooo!

The most surprising omission of AFL 99 is the lack of any multiplayer options. That's right, no network games, not even two player! I don't know whether the developers are just holding out for some truly amazing AFL network experience, but all I can think is that many, many gamers have missed out on a great gaming experience because this network option is not offered. It's a great pity and I suppose we can only hope this will be rectified in AFL 2000!

As usual, buggy

My only real gripe with AFL 99 was that even in its final release version, it

seems there are still various problems, including crashing when interchanging players. As is the case these days, there will certainly be a patch at the EA website to fix the problem at the moment or in the near future. However, personally I found this pretty annoying and I would have hoped that such minor flaws were picked up before the release. But that's me and AFL 99 is really pretty hard to fault otherwise.

Top stuff

There are many reasons why AFL 99 is a winner. The graphics are pretty and the gameplay is fun. More importantly, you won't get



"Yeah, thanks Dipper. Well, y'know, we knew it was always gonna be a tough one. Bazza gave us a bit of a rev at quarter time, and credit to the boys, they knuckled down and done the hard work, and we came away wif va win"

PLUS⁺

bogged down in the little things, thanks to the excellent menus and options and this allows you to just enjoy the game. Many will bemoan the absence of network play and that's fair enough in my opinion. However, don't let this stop you picking the great game that is AFL 99. I hear word of an updated line-ups and statistics patch for the game, which can only be good. So what do you have to complain about? EA Sports have given us the goods again. AFL 99 is here and it's nigh on brilliant.

John Dewhurst



GOLD
90%

Category Sports sim
Players 1!
Publisher EA Sports
Price \$69.95
Rating G
Available Now

For Super graphics, super gameplay, superlative menus and options, the Aussie Rules game of the moment. Super, super, super!!!

Against No network play options and some teething problems, but you know what they say about gift horses...

Need P166, Win9x, 32MB RAM

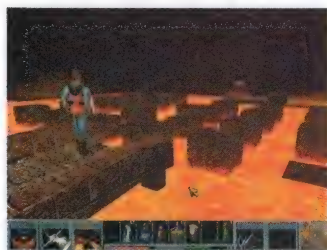
Want PII-233, 64MB RAM, 3D accelerator

3D SUPPORT
Direct 3D

KING'S QUEST 8: Mask of Eternity

The world's most family-friendly RPG gets a modern day makeover. It's still quite good, just very different

All across the world pale, curious faces squint into the light for the first time in two years. Rarely seen creatures emerge from their hibernation like giant pink witchety grubs, soft with indolence and clumsy from inertia. Lacking the motor skills of ordinary people (a side effect of their long period of repose), these are the adventure gamers of legend, the people who used to dig typing things like 'put the blender with Frodo's gonads and then take Hobbit goulash to wizard' Imagine their surprise, then, at seeing Roberta Williams, their champion of champions, pitting them in mortal combat with all manner of beasts from skeleton warriors to two headed Dragons! Lord, it's time for a Panadol and a nice lie down.



Niche genre

The King's Quest series has been almost a genre in it's own right for years now. Creator Roberta Williams has kept any hint of action and oozing blood out of the series from day one, and managed to build a following of gamers who tended to be people who didn't play many other types of games. It's a cliché but the King's Quest series also attracted more female players than any other game for the PC because of the story and puzzle based structure and romantic plots.

Cabaret singers

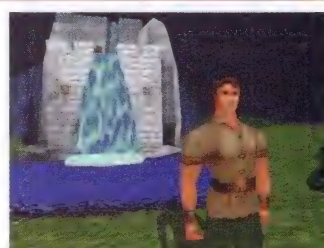
And, I have to admit, one of the best things about King's Quest 8 is going to Sierra's message board to see all the plaintive messages from the old school fans of the series: "Help, I can't kill the first skeleton, and can someone PLEASE tell me what this thing in my hand is with the



sharp bladed bit stuck to it?" I even saw one that went something like "I don't want to kill anything, is there an option to play as a cabaret singer?" Oh those wacky King's Quest fans. Once the initial shock wears off, however, I think most people who delve into Mask Of Eternity will have a pretty good time.

Mass market appeal

You could call King's Quest 8 the first mass market King's



The KQ8 series has finally evolved to where Ultima VIII was five years ago - a fantastic story marred by silly puzzles and a cumbersome action/arcade interface





Quest in the sense that it has broadened the appeal greatly with sexy new 3D graphics and an action focus. I'm sure Sierra's accountants had nothing to do with that, absolutely nothing, at all. Nope. It is certainly

the most beautiful game in the series, if you have a 3D accelerator, and probably the prettiest RPG to date. Now there's another point, is this an RPG or an adventure game?

Adventure or RPG

Your character, a chap by the name of Connor, has all of the usual RPG trappings. Defence, Attack and Ranged

When confusing RPG speak and mystifying plot elements really begin to annoy, there's always the Magical Nutcracker to bludgeon your enemies to death with

weapon stats, an inventory, and the game has an experience point system that lets you develop as you defeat monsters and complete quests. But, like *Return To Kronos* reviewed elsewhere, it has a linear feel that is more at home in an adventure game rather than an RPG.

Silly puzzles

Many of the puzzles are more adventure oriented as well with all sorts of cryptic clues to be figured out, and I have to admit that without Sierra's message board I would never have finished the game. If you don't have





access to the web I wouldn't recommend that you buy this one, unless you want to be driven slowly insane! Some of the puzzles are just ridiculous and you'd never figure them out in a million years, though to be fair there are clues to most of the important puzzles.

Fiddling fun

Those of you coming from the action gaming side of things will probably find Mask's 3D engine rather primitive, to say the least. There is no proper mouse look feature, which I found absurd, and jumping action is very difficult to predict (which makes some of the game's puzzles really lots of fun. Really...) and there isn't much in the way of strategy because it's such a simple system. Look at your enemy, push mouse button. There is also the option to play in first person or

third but I found the control method to be too fiddly to be able to use the third person easily and spent the whole game in first person anyway.

Back'n'forth

I found the character's movement speed in the game to be a bit too slow as well, there is hardly any difference between running speed and walking speed and both are very laid back. On some levels you are required to do a lot of travelling back and forth around the place and I ended up keeping reading material in front of me so I had something to do while I held the 'move forward' control down with my finger, or some heavy object!

Compare and contrast

Well so far it all sounds pretty grim doesn't it? Well it isn't, I did finish the thing without having to force myself



after all! The main criticisms of the game come from looking at it either from the perspective of the older King's Quest games or from the perspective of the latest first person action games. If you try and look at the game for what it is, without any preconceptions, or perhaps by comparing it with titles like Battlespire and Lands of Lore2, it comes up smelling rather sweet.

Prithee, sire

The strength of Mask is its' atmosphere, it sucks you in enough to ignore the bits you don't like, and if you have access to a forum or discussion board about the game to help you through the infuriating parts, it's actually very engrossing. The story is good enough to make you want to delve deeper into its' mysteries and the characters you meet quite interest-

KQ8: The Story

Mask of Eternity is the story of Connor, an unremarkable young peasant bloke living an unremarkable life in good ol' Daventry. As the story begins, our hero is chatting with a young lady in his village (doing his best to try and separate her from her clothing of course) when the harmony of the whole universe is suddenly shattered. A storm gathers in the sky above and breaks swiftly and brutally, blotting out all the life and light in the land. Somewhere in the heavens above Daventry, the Mask of Eternity - the very face of God - has been split by a dark and terrible magic! Oooh!

The fragments fall like meteorites from heaven and scatter throughout the cosmos, landing in many worlds; as they fall, darkness and chaos rise and swallow up the universe. Connor bends over to pick up a glowing golden shard that has landed at his feet. When he straightens up again, every human being in Daventry (except for him) has been turned into a pillar of stone. Oops! Foul, corrupt monsters wander the landscape, eager to inflict severe bodily harm upon a poor peasant boy. Double oops! And that's how the game starts. Alone, unarmed, and wearing nothing but the tunic on his back (and no underpants, either), Connor takes up one corner of the Mask of Eternity and begins the ultimate quest: restoring light, truth, and order to the cosmos.



Our hero rides with the winged beast - which doesn't seem to mind a bit



Emerging from the portal of Nexus, Strog was surprised to note that he wasn't in fact, in the lingerie department after all. So he killed everyone.

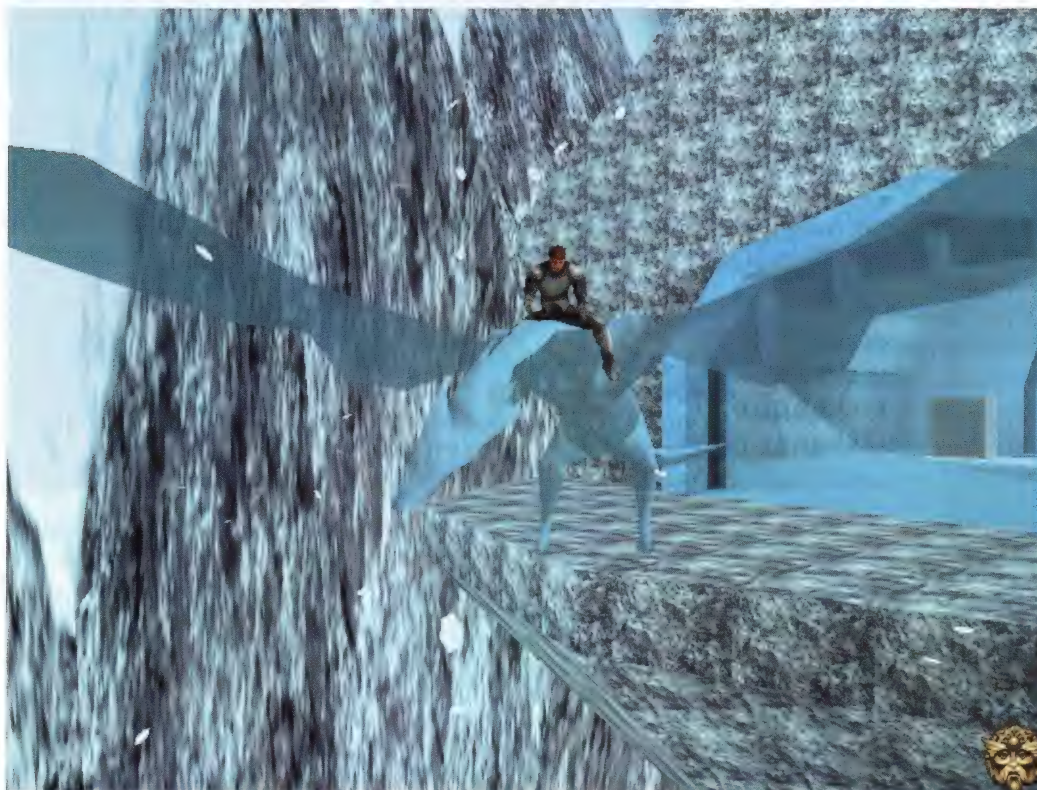
accents and the thees and thous are just there so we don't get confused and think that we're watching a wildlife documentary.

Bye bye Roberta!

Sierra have announced that this is the last King's Quest game as Roberta Williams is probably bored stupid by the whole thing. And seeing that a lot of old school fans have been bagging her out for King's Quest 8 she probably isn't feeling too much like changing

her mind. The end of an era or the beginning of a new one? We'll have to wait and see.

George Soropos



ing and at times entertaining. There are some of the usual fantasy cliches as well: the Unicorn, the medieval setting and the silly pseudo medieval dialect, but I've yet to see a game that didn't have at least a few cliches lurking around.

Dost thou annoy?

The audio is superb, which really helps to draw you into the action as much as any other

aspect of the game. The music is unintrusive (try explaining that word to people who write car racing games) but still creates a wonderful and unique feel to each area while the voice acting is also very good. One thing that did annoy me mightily was the preponderance of 'thees' and 'thous' in the dialogue. It makes the game sound like one of those old Robin Hood movies where all the characters have American



85%

Category RPG/Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Sierra Studios
Price \$89.95
Rating M
Available Now

For Nice story, simple interface and very pretty graphics

Against King's Quest fans will be mortified by the combat action, puzzles are just too convoluted, and there are a few bugs in the code

Need Win 95, P166, 32MB RAM, 4xCD

Want P2 300, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2 based accelerator

3D SUPPORT
D3D and 3Dfx Native

BLOOD 2

The LithTech engine looks good, but a lack of atmosphere and Melrose-style AI keeps this in the middle of the pack

Blood 2: The Chosen sees the return of Caleb, the Cabal and Tchernobog, the Dark God, in another round of first person shoot-em-mash-me action. Blood 2 differs from the current round of FPS games by being a jack-of-all-trades. You have the magical elements and character choice options of the Hexen games combined with the futuristic weapons and visuals of Quake II. In fact, the LithTech engine, developed by Monolith for this title, looks a lot like the newer Quake engine we are all familiar with. I smell a game trying to make a lot of people happy.

Caleb v Cabal

In this new Blood adventure, we find Caleb and the Cabal (try saying that five times) in 2030, one hundred years after the original. The Cabal are causing Caleb no end of grief, so naturally you must face them. This time around however, you can choose to be one of four characters:

Caleb, Ophelia, Gabriella or Ishmael. Each has varying abilities: Ishmael is your magic wielder, Gabriella, your big mercenary. The other two fall somewhere in between. The abilities of each player improve over time, allowing more and more bloody combat. From here on in the game is the same tried-and-true action that began with Wolfenstein 3D all those years ago.

Dim drab brown

Monolith offers us Blood 2 via their new LithTech engine, which is actually quite impressive. The textural effects are really good: the smoke that billows from exhaust pipes, the lighting and shading, the grand large "Cathedral"-type areas, are there in all their glory. It looks great. We begin in grungy urban wastelands, so get ready for the greys and browns! Like the original Quake, the surroundings are insistently dim and dark. Character movement is fairly good and the environment is quite interactive, with blast marks and bullet holes

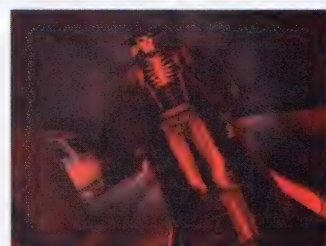
staining walls. Also blood and dead bodies remain in place when you turn your back to them, which helps with the realism of the piece.

Many weapons

If there's one thing this game has, it's the arsenal at your disposal - 21



A huge array of weaponry at your disposal isn't enough to lift this into the hotly contested "really, really good" category



individual weapons. Some of the more interesting ones are the sawnoff shotgun, howitzer, napalm launcher, the life leech and the return of the old favourite: the Voodoo doll. The many weapons are a bonus, particularly for multiplayer. Now, a common problem in multiplayer FPS games is getting variety in weapons without making any too strong or too weak (and hence just avoided). Blood 2 is not immune to this I'm afraid. For the single player levels, you'll probably just stick to one weapon, like the Sub Machine Gun, which can be fired dual-handed or the shotgun, unless you've got a really nasty weapon, like the Singularity Generator.

Caleb v Amanda & Billy

The enemies you encounter are suitably macabre, wielding guns, crowbars, axes and metal rods - that's if they have hands (take a look at the Shikari - damn it's ugly!). They're fright-

ening but really they're as stupid as the cast of Melrose Place (who are also frightening, hmmm...). The A.I. is pretty woeful and once you turn a corner, it's like you've never existed to the horde you've just walked past. Regardless of what GT Interactive say, these enemies are not realistic. Another problem is the level design. You can expect to be lead through levels with the occasional obvious secret area and I didn't find it particularly non-linear. This is the big downfall of Blood 2. The stupid enemies and the ordinary level design make for unexciting gameplay. It makes the game incredibly ordinary.

Not for kiddies!

There are the obligatory mutilated and tortured bodies strewn



Happily enough, the trend for lots and lots of unnecessary gubbage is here in spades. Watch those internal organs fly!

ter and your opponents are just plain irritating. Single player atmosphere is done much better elsewhere - Jedi Knight for one. I couldn't help but feel annoyed and disappointed by levels that didn't offer interest,

let alone scare the bejesus out of me. It all adds up to a game that is not terrific, but not terrible and really unmemorable.

The unchosen

The nature of first person shooter games today, is that if it's not the best, it's not worth a lot. We've had an almost constant barrage of revolutionary titles over the last two years: from the Quakes and the Hexens to Unreal and now Half-

Life. That's a lot of pressure on Monolith and I don't feel they really shouldered it. As with most first person shooters, you're going to have a lot more fun with Blood 2 on a network, but that doesn't make up for its lacklustre elements. Be warned that if you don't have a fairly new machine, this game is going to go like a tricycle on the beach. We all know how crucial fluid movement is in these games. I'd recommend a Pentium II, although Blood 2 will run on older Pentiums. A lack of atmosphere and game-play that is profoundly un compelling, lures me away from Blood 2. If you loved the original, you'll like this one, but for the rest of you, Blood 2 is probably better left unchosen. There are better titles out there.

John Dewhurst

No 'oomph'

The pity is that while it sports a few shocks and surprises, there is next to no atmosphere at all! It sounds strange but I just wasn't gripped by Blood 2. The story verges on the ridiculous and I didn't really care who was who, or what it was all about. I didn't feel fear or excitement while playing it. To be honest, it can be really quite dull, at times and it lacks the dramatic punch necessary to be a really great game. The visuals work, but the soundtrack lacks the quality necessary for the complete experience. The screams and yells of your charac-



Well, at least they've dumped the Build engine which was used for the original Blood. That's something at least.

PLUS+



72%

Category First person action
Players 1-32 (TCP/IP, IPX)
Publisher GT Interactive
Price \$89.95
Rating MA
Available Now

For LithTech engine looks great, nice lighting, moderately interactive environments, good selection of weapons.

Against Less than compelling level design, predictable enemies, macabre but strangely dull atmosphere. Uninspiring gameplay.

Need P166 (with 3D acceleration), P233 (without 3D acceleration), 32MB RAM, 4MB 3D card

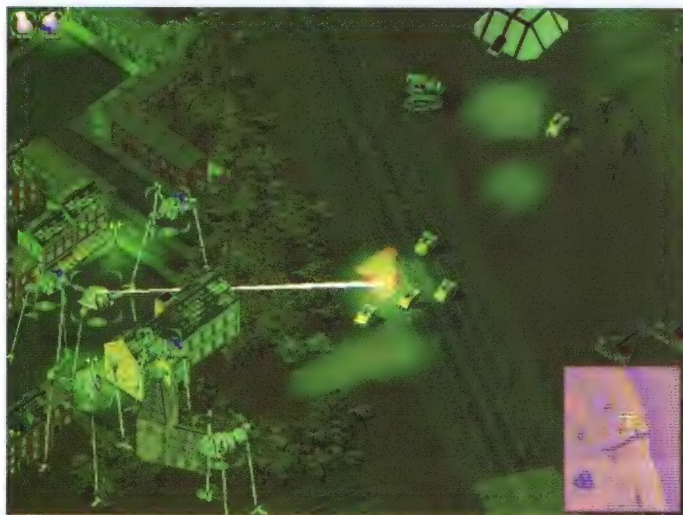
Want PII 300, 128MB RAM, second generation 3D card

3D SUPPORT

D3D, Rendition

WAR OF THE WORLDS

H.G. Wells' vision is finally brought to the SVGA screen, but like this?



No one ever thought in 1898 that there would be life on Mars, an environmentally depleted, hostile lifeform, that might one day fly across space and drop great big pods filled with fighting machines and martian stuff to take over Earth by defeating the strongest military power, Great Britain (well at least it isn't the U.S. for once). This was the exact thing that writer H.G. Wells had in mind, and even today War of the Worlds is regarded as one of the most influential sci-fi stories ever written. Given the scenario it seemed natural to turn this into RTS. The developers have gone one step further and integrated an economic engine that powers production and the overall (boasted) non-linear campaign, where battles are created if you're overly-confident enough to.

Foolish Earthlings!

When you're the pitiful humans, you're fighting an uphill battle with inferior technology and little matchbox tanks that could be crushed by my Reeboks. However you do have time on your side and a homeground advantage (that is rapidly eaten up). The humans must quickly establish an uber-

efficient economy, to build and upgrade their defensive capacity in order to halt the martian advance. If you're the martians you may start out walking taller than the rest (literally), but you've only got what you took with you, the martians must crush the defiant spirit of the humans as soon as possible (not so easy in the later territories) before the Humans can counter their momentum.

Messy interface

However, it doesn't all work. Both the RTS and micromanagement elements are sorely lacking compared to dedicated counterparts which makes them less functional in the game. The core strategy of the game is performed in the war room, a map representing the territories of Great Britain. The interface is a mess, being split into three separate views, one for units, another for buildings, and the last for resources. On top of that you have to jump into RTS



The storyline is hella cool, and there's great scope for an interesting game. It wasn't to be. Bah!

mode to build inside the various territories. The need to switch between several views often leads to crucial detail being overlooked by the wandering eye. Units are pushed around with accompanying arrows like in those old war movies. Strangely the unit construction is handled on the war map, and each unit is built over a period of 'cycles' or time. The game



throws you initially into the war map with little explanation or indication of how to start (trial and error anyone?), screen elements are identifiable pictorially but with little textual aid. Like the RTS component, the war map is also bland, and devoid of crucial information such as the quantity of resources currently stored. A crucial ETA is absent, leading to carefully coordinated offensives being brought down by speculating wrongly on atmospheric conditions.





It leaves one feeling quite forlorn, for this is another in the burgeoning 'couldabeen' category

longer they occupy it, as the Earthen ecosphere is converted by the 'red weed'.

Click. Wait. Wait...

Unit production and research is disproportionately timed in production, but it doesn't really matter as everything moves so slowly that you will fall asleep waiting (even with the time gauge on full) and for a game that is supposed to move dynamically, the slow speed of the game's production makes things impossible to time or coordinate. I also got the idea that the 'efficiency' percentage was a random number with the game offering me no clue or method for which I could improve it. The RTS component is near functionally useless, as the game is all about becoming economically dominant.

So sad

With patience and if you're willing to play it for as long as I did, including having to restart about 10 times to get the start 'right', then there is a challenging single player experience underneath.

You've also got

PLUS+



For a transcript of Jeff Wayne's 70's musical version and more info, check out : <http://www.war-of-the-worlds.com>



Squad mentality

While the time fluctuates, so too does the atmosphere and ambient lighting in the RTS component, this factor is crucial as the time of day is integral to the success of attack and defense. Humans will falter blindly in the dark, reliant on the minuscule ranges of their headlights which makes them easy pickings for the martians who sport night vision and great big heat rays. While the essence of any offensive is the ability to coordinate troops, WOTW only allows you to control them in squads, each unit represents a group e.g. three machines for the martians and a group of 6 to 8 tanks for the humans. Click on one, and you highlight the whole group. In the age of tank rushes, this may seem to be appropriate, but tank rushing is useless especially for the humans who MUST spread themselves out and attack from different points and angles to defeat the martian fighting machines, and equally essential is the martian need to constantly redirect fire. The inability to control units on

an individual basis is completely ridiculous and results in all tactical control being useless as each group just makes a beeline for each other and results in little more than a standoff.

No huddled masses

There could have been so much more done with this title, the game is just one long slog to capture all the territories, with no indications of how the campaign is going. The H.G. Wells' world was ripe with chances to present huddled masses marching hope against hope carrying nothing but salvaged belongings, cities and towns razed to blackened ashes accompanied by corpses or fleeing masses (instead the buildings just disappear), martian harvesting of human blood, even fragmented radio news broadcasts and any other indication that a WAR IS GOING ON! Hell, the only thing I saw were buildings and units, no people OR aliens, making the game look kinda dead. However, Martian landscape is transformed, becoming redder the

to be incredibly enthusiastic about the content as there is very little to progress or encourage you to keep playing. However I don't think most people will even try; it's a real pity that this is one of those tragic 'could-a-beens'.

Munley Leong

70%

Category RTS/Sim hybrid
Players 1
Publisher GT Interactive
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For The subject matter is quite interesting and the overall theme is executed with detail and consistency, the atmosphere is pleasing, the movies are well crafted, and the blending of the RTS genre with micro-management is more workable than most.

Against Seems unfinished, both the RTS and sim areas could have done with a bit more work, as could have internal presentation. A steep learning curve and a great deal of patience is required to get going.

Need P133, 16MB RAM, Win 9x, 100MB HDD

Want 32MB RAM, 2MB+ Video Card

GANGSTERS: Organised Crime

Does your chosen career bore you? Ever thought you could be the next Al Capone or Neddy Smith? Well, now's your chance, paisano!

New Temperance, 1923: A thriving metropolis, just da place for a hood like me to run my operations. Johnny

"Teardrop" Martin's da name, but you can call me Johnny, sugar. Business ain't wad it used to be. Just da udder day, me and my boy Sam was discussing our erm...insurance policy with one a' our clients. This particular customer was not acting wid a great deal of coytesy. It was like this:

"So Tony, you don't tink you needs our protection, no more, aah?"

"Johnny, business ain't what it used to be.... I got Stella and da kids, please Johnny..."

"Tony, we go back a ways.... We're friends... but business is business. Capiche?"

So Sam says, "You want I should have his legs broke?"

And like I says, business is business...

Little Ceasar

Roll up, roll up folks for a dip into organised crime. Gangsters, the latest title from Eidos, is a new style strategy game that allows the player to become the biggest Don in the whole of New Temperance and to use whatever means necessary to do this, so ya betta keep ya mouth shut, scheeeeeee! I say new style strategy because it is not exclusively real time or turn based, the two traditional camps. The two sections of the game are the gang organiser and the working week. The player assigns orders to his "hoods" and others in his employ, at the beginning of the week in the gang organiser. Then in the working week, the player watches his lieutenants carry out their orders as the week elapses. It's good to see a developer looking seriously at the nature of a game and using a style of play that suits it. Gangsters is a good example of this.

Crime organisation

There are many ways a gang leader gets on the road to becoming a wealthy "legitimate businessman". You need to set up

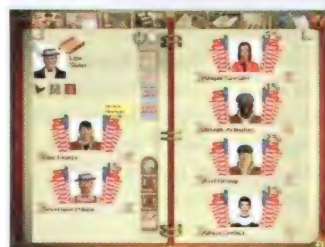


Perhaps there isn't quite as much violence and husky Italian accents as you'd think, but that's not to say that this makes for a boring game - not at all

extortion rackets or "protection" scams, you need to recruit more hoods, you need to set up a number of "legitimate businesses" that "front" for your illegal operations. Perhaps most importantly, you need to deal with other gangs, whether with diplomacy, if they're more powerful - or if not with a bullet in the ear!!! Orders for all these actions are assigned to and carried out by your men. They can patrol, recruit, extort, intimidate, bomb, kidnap, kill.... There are only so many hours in the week though, so if you want more done, you have to hire more men. Therein lies the game.

Patrol, recruit, extort

Gangsters is, I repeat, a strategy game. So there isn't going to be a lot of shootings and bombings, not until later in the game anyway. The emphasis is on building an empire and maintaining control. It's a monetary affair. At the start of a game, you



know little about the surrounding area. So you must, by use of your men, explore the surroundings. Gangsters is a good challenge because the player must use his men wisely. A choice



between collecting "protection" or patrolling; recruiting more hoods or extorting. All of these need to be done. The attributed of hoods need to be considered when assigning them jobs.





Someone who has a low firearms rating shouldn't be made a hit-man, but if they have high stealth and explosive ratings, they would make a good bomber.

Deep and satisfying

This is the really impressive aspect of Gangsters. There is depth. There are so many options, you won't know what to do with yourself. In the gang organiser, there are sections for your lieutenants, lawyer, accountant, diplomacy (other gangs), graphs of information, city maps and game options. There is a lot to do. Another example is with your employees. They can get upset and demand a pay increase. You have the options of paying them more and keeping them on, firing them, giving them a kicking or even giving them a killing! The enjoyment that Gangsters offers is most certainly long term. The game really

comes into its own when you realise all the different ways you can choose to deal with situations. You will probably spend more time in the gang organiser at the start of the week than you will in the working week. This is good - it's a strategy game.

Goombah interface

Gangsters can seem to be a complex game, at least in the beginning. The interface in the game, particularly that used in the gang organiser is anything but easy to pick up. You'll need to do the four tutorials and then play it for a day or two before you really feel like you know what's going on. I suppose realistically this is a fault with the game. However, once you know what's going on it works and works well. They could have just made it a little more player-friendly. If you've assigned orders to a lieutenant and forget to confirm them, you won't be prompted to do so. For the following week, that lieutenant will do nothing, which can be really, really annoying, especially when



some dirty rat needs a bomb through their front room!

Movie feel

The overall design and feel of the piece is very good, not so much authentic as Hollywood authentic. Check out the introduction in black and white news-reel footage - it's cheeky and clever. The music is enjoyable but strangely sounds like a mix between jazz of the 1950s and funk of the 1970s - I can't hear the Charleston anywhere! But all up, it's just good not-so-clean fun. Hothouse Creations have gone out to make a good quality game that is exciting and interesting. Who said strategy had to be all serious and gloomy? Gangsters has a fantastic feel.

Store security

Real faults with this game are few and far between. Some conversations are downright hilarious:

"This is a lovely place - YOU WANT IT SHOULD STAY DAT WAY!?", says gangster.

"I'll do anything!!", says terrified shopkeeper.

The fertile mix of strong strategy play and a lively theme make Gangsters a winner for all you hoods and molls out there. Gangsters will require much patience but will reward the attentive player with many hours of enjoyment. Get it or your mudda gets it!

John Dewhurst



Heh heh. That'll teach *them* to refuse my offer of protection...

PLUS+



85%

Category Strategy
Players 1-4 (IPX, TCP/IP)
Publisher Eidos
Price \$TBA
Rating M15+
Available Now

For Strategy with depth, Superfun theme and style, excellent replay value, Fedoras as far as the eye can see!

Against Interface is not that easy to pick up.

Need P166, 32 MB RAM

Want P200, 64MB RAM, 4 MB video card

MIA: Missing in Action

Just like Rambo 2, and just as simple and arcadey

MIA is a game focussed around the American helicopter pilots who flew in the Vietnam war.

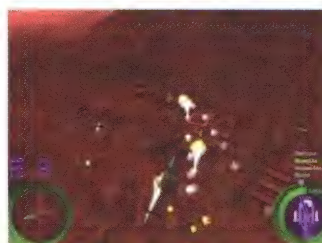
You fly an antiquated weapons platform of the day, equipped with door gunners, front-mounted heavy machine guns and grenade/rocket launchers. You tangle with tanks, AAA installations, machine gun nests and foot soldiers, then head home to get a FMV dressing down from your shabby commander-in-charge, who acts rather badly. As you progress, he starts respecting your skills and you kinda become "war buddies". The best missions you face under Cpl. Shabby are the SEAL supports, where you lay flares to guide the boys on foot and hammer heavy defences to soften the targets before they get there.

The killing fields

The world is rendered in quite respectable detail, with rolling foothills populated by livestock, rivers and trees. Objects in the far distance are quite discernible, and become very detailed when viewed close-up. Things like explosions and tracer fire look very cool indeed, with trailing projectile smoke, then puffing flame and shrapnel scattering. Invasions happen around your ears, with friendly forces and enemies facing off in all directions. This kind of parallel event modelling is extra cool, as you can supply your services



to the parts of the battle where it's most required, and use your ground-based allies to freeze enemies so you can lay down some concentrated hell. Wingmen require babysitting



though and you must designate targets for them with flares before they open fire. Convoy vehicles cleverly cling to their armoured support units, and drive carefully around wreckage

"I swear I didn't know it was an ice-cream factory!"

to get where they are going. They also skid to spectacular crashes when hit.

Apocalyptic Agent Orange

The foliage is rather thin for Vietnam. It resembles a dry tundra rather than the impenetrable rainforest jungle that is the Vietnamese wilderness. Unless the entire country was blanketed with Agent Orange, there's no way it looked like this. From maximum height, you can spot a foot soldier in the trees at long range, and keep him in perfect view on the ground as he runs about. That's rubbish. You would have maybe one glimpse of him as he





passed through a gap in the canopy, then once he dug in, he'd disappear. It still looks pretty good, just not much like the actual Vietnam.

Choplifter reminiscence

The tasks you perform will be immediately familiar to anyone who has played the Arcade/Sega game Choplifter from long ago. It was a side-scrolling 2D game where you flew around shooting tanks and AA guns, then landing, picking up hostages and dropping them off down at the US embassy. MIA is almost exactly the same, except the focus is more heavily on blowing things up than rescue, and it's 3D. The difficulty, however, is

very comparable.

Shooting stuff on the ground seems ridiculously easy. As your aiming reticle waves close to the target, it will auto-lock while you have a rough proximity. This can actually hinder you, especially when trying to closely "lead" a moving target, more often than not you are forced to shoot directly at it, which of course results in a miss.

Bouncing helos

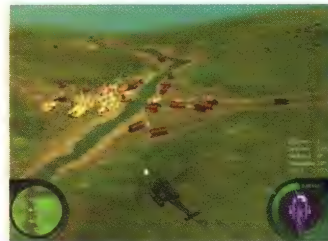
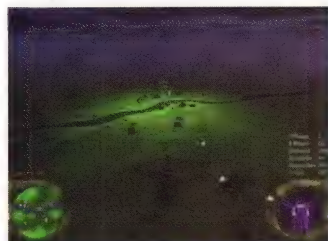
Also the only camera view available is an external view, which seems excessive as there is no real advantage to seeing the



chopper on-screen, but it often obscures low targets and hinders your aim. It's also literally impossible to crash, which earns this game the dubious distinction of "the Afterburner of Chopper sims" (for the kiddies, Afterburner was a super-simplified Arcade F-15 dogfight game where crashing couldn't happen).

It's a simple, fun, chopper game for those who like a bit of arcade fun.

Ed Dawson



Choplifter meets Afterburner. The reason why this one will probably go MIA?

PLUS+



<http://www.glassghost.com>

65%

Category Arcadey Chopper Sim
Players 1-2 (Modem,TCP/IP)
Publisher GT Interactive
Price \$89.95
Rating M15+
Available Now

For Nice 3D environments, great explosions and enemy behaviour modelling.

Against Inability to hit the ground, fixed external view, ESP-powered auto-aiming

Need P166, 16Mb RAM, compatible 3D card

Want P233+, 32Mb RAM.

3D SUPPORT

3Dfx, ATI, Rendition, Permedia, Riva and Direct 3D compatibles

ISRAELI AIR FORCE

It doesn't have quite the same glitz and glamour of Falcon 4, but IAF still flies smoothly, and packs a nice punch too

Israeli Air Force (IAF) is the first Jane's flight sim that has not been developed in-house by a Jane's development team, at least to the best of my knowledge. No criticism, but you can feel the difference as soon as you open the box. Only a 100 odd page manual and a Keyboard Reference Card with two CDs. Dig a little into it, and you find that the VP in Charge of Production was the guy behind US Navy Fighters, ATF and Fighter's Anthology! Popular games all, games that pushed the hardware capabilities of the day with some whiz bang graphics and a variety of aircraft to fly. Fun for all ages and capabilities, and IAF is no exception.

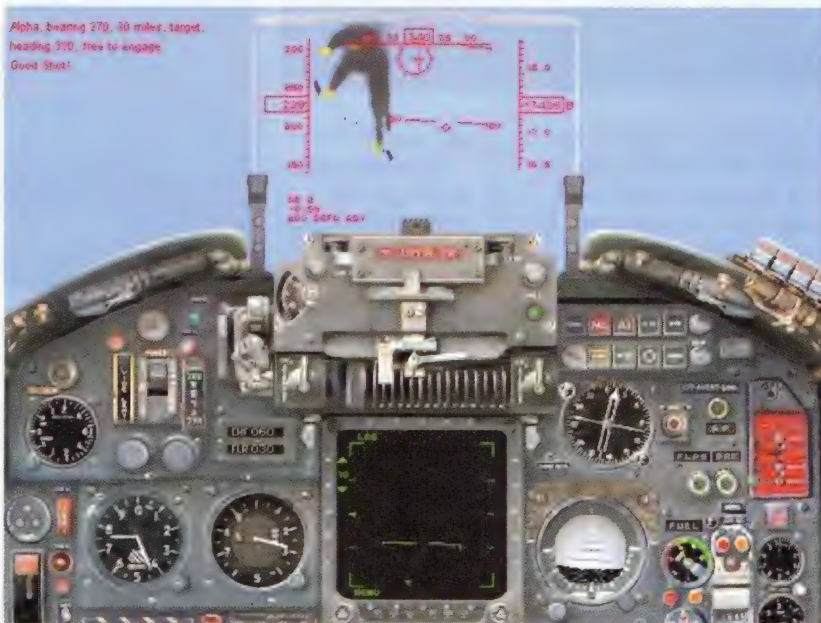
IAF the hard way

The Israeli Defence Force, let alone the IAF, have had a history that is worth studying, no matter what you think of the Middle East turmoil. The FMV introduction to IAF will leave you with no other opinion than the IAF has done it hard! A second CD named the IAF 50th Anniversary CD-ROM is included with the game. This contains a multitude of information on the IAF, including movies, history lessons and interviews with veterans! What we have here is a game with an historical twist like Jane's WWII Fighters; once again a paradigm shift in flight simulation because

you get more than you bargained for. And what's more, the team's developers are a veritable who's who of retired IAF pilots.

Large installation

Be warned up front that installation takes either 251 MB or 635 MB! You also require a CPU with MMX technology; no MMX and the game won't run! A good deal of RAM and a large swapfile will also help the game along, but I had no troubles on a



P233 with 32MB RAM.

Once you start up the game, you will find a new interface that is easy to use. Selections for Campaign, Scramble, Training, Multiplayer, Mission Creator, Preferences and Reference are available. So immediately you see that you have the full suite of options that you expect from a modern flight sim.

Wide appeal

Training is the typical Jane's voice over with text instructions on the screen. Good work, and it's here that you get your introduction to the aircraft you will be flying: the F-15C/D, F-16D, F4E, Lavi ATF, F4 2000, Kfir (C7), and Mirage III. An impressive array, indeed. Each aircraft has a different 2D cockpit, and if you've flown F15 and F16 sims before (and who hasn't?) you will immediately be at home. All the MFDs work as they should, and



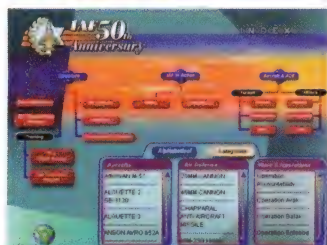
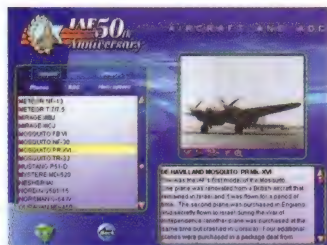
(above) The MiG-29 can only be flown in Multiplayer missions, but certainly adds spice to a head to head, human vs human encounter

(below) This SU22 has given Delta Leader a bad day in the jungle. Note the Voxel type graphics lose definition up close





the cockpit instrumentation is mouse activated allowing you to bring up the gear, flaps, switch radar ranges, and designate targets etc. Overall, all aspects of the avionics are much easier to use than in Jane's F15 or Falcon 4. The flight models are also apparent in training mode. Each aircraft has its own feel, but I don't think the emphasis of the game is "hard core", so all these characteristics will appeal to a wide audience.



Canned heat

In Campaign Mode you can select from historical scenarios depicting the Six-Day War, Yom Kippur War and the Lebanon War, each with seven canned missions. Or you can choose Future Scenarios on the Iraqi, Syrian and Lebanese front. Canned mis-

sions are something that I usually dislike, but to fit the historical theme they must be so in IAF.

Historical realism

The game designers really do this well. For example, in the very first mission in the Yom Kippur War, just as you are taking off from your airbase, incoming fighters are attacking! Off to the right of the runway a building explodes and this gets you into the battle from the first instant. You will often find yourself vectored to conduct another task, whether or not you have completed your initial mission! This gets very interesting when low on stores, but is exactly how the IAF have historically fought. Lots of radio chatter while flying, and each mission can be flown time and again in each of the different aircraft, so this does add variety to the canned missions.

Flying buddies

On the multiplayer side of things, each mission is multiplayer cooperative via LAN, Internet or Jane's Combat Net. This, teamed with the basic but easy to use mission builder has IAF on par with Falcon 4! You can also fly the MiG 23 and 29 in multiplayer modes.

Icky Voxels

The graphics engine is Voxel based. You'll either love it or hate it because it looks great up



(above) Mission Briefings are comprehensive and even include hyperlinked actions that indicate on the map where each item is

high, but deteriorates down low. Ground objects remain well defined, and the damage model used is again full of whizz-bangery and splinters that, really, are more entertaining than realistic. Finally, IAF is the first jet sim to use Force Feedback! I got the surprise of my life as my Microsoft Force Feedback Pro jumped in my hand on take off, vibrated with the guns, and jumped with missile launch. I'm not sure about this. In fly by wire aircraft you would not feel this through the stick, but you would through the airframe - hmmm, let me work on my opinion for a while. Nonetheless, it certainly didn't detract from the game.

I'm happy with IAF; long live the fun of US Navy Fighters and its successors.

Maj Ian Lindgren



To further your knowledge of the IAF, why not look at its early beginnings? I recommend a read of *The Israeli Air Force 1947-1960: An Illustrated History* (Schiffer Military/Aviation History). Published in January 1998. ISBN 0764303902



GOLD
90%

Category Flight sim
Players 1-8 (IPX, TCP/IP, and Jane's Combat Net)
Publisher EA/Jane's
Price \$89.95
Rating G
Available Now

For A variety of aircraft to fly, with different avionics and flight model for each aircraft, a mission editor, cooperative multiplayer support that places it on par with Falcon 4. Another "Boys Own" history tour through the chronicles of IAF history

Against The canned missions won't appeal to everyone, and the Voxel type graphics won't either

Need P200, 32MB RAM

Want PII 300, 128MB RAM

3D SUPPORT
D3D and 3Dfx

RETURN TO KRONDOR

The previous two haven't quite been earth shattering, so should we really want to Return to Krondor?

Raymond E. Feist's Krondor stories have formed the basis for two games from Sierra so far and this is the third.

Return To Krondor is a very different beast than the earlier titles, as you can see from the grabs if you're familiar with the earlier games. It was actually developed by an entirely different team of people to those who put together Betrayal At Antara, a fact which will probably come as a relief to those of you who played that horrible game.

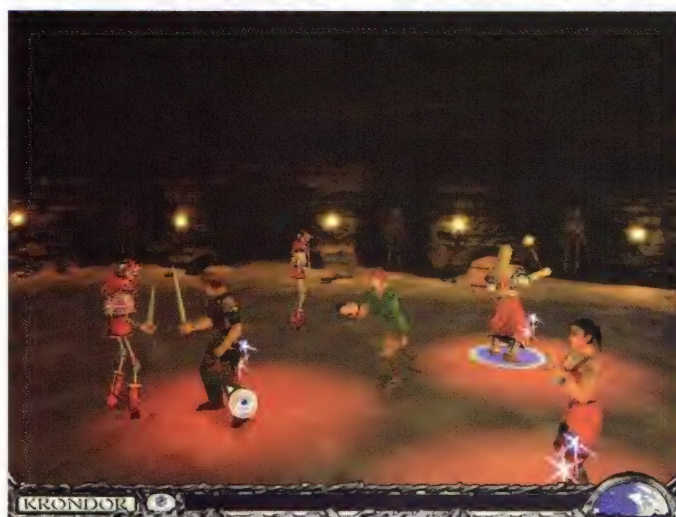
RPG-Lite

If you've ever played Kalisto's excellent game Dark Earth you'll notice a similarity in the way that Return To Krondor does its graphics. More like an adventure game than an RPG, Return uses hand painted backdrops for its locations and superimposes animated characters over these backgrounds. This technique has certain advantages for the player but, as an RPG also limits the game tremendously.

The biggest advantage in my opinion is the lack of need to load massive 3D levels every time you reload a savegame. Return to Krondor has an almost instant save and load function which any experienced RPG and adventure gamer knows prevents a lot of aggravation. The other advantage of course is that the locations always look stunning. The big disadvantage, especially for an RPG, is that the need to create so many backdrops invariably limits the size of the game and your freedom to move within it.

Freedom; lack thereof

Return To Krondor suffers badly from both of these side effects and it is really this one point that stops the game from being a true RPG. Return is short, very short and it lacks the freedom of exploration that marks any true Role Playing Game. The designers of RTK broke the game up into a number of chapters, each distinct from the last. And while none of the Krondor games have been true RPG's in the



sense that they all limited your exploration of the realm in which you live, this one is easily the most restrictive.

In fact there is only one chapter in the game in which you are allowed to wander the countryside slaughtering and pillaging for experience points, just one! Of course this tight control does allow for a detailed plot and story to unfold but it still ends up

Another in the growing adventure/RPG hybrid genre. It's not the best ever, but there are plenty of worse examples

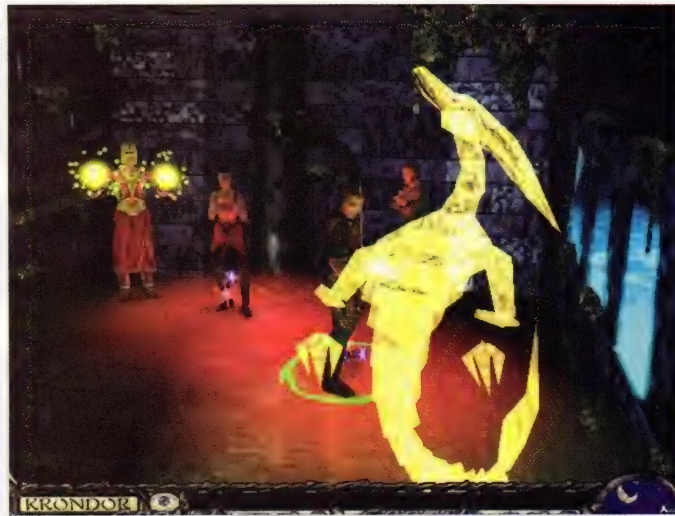


feeling much more like an adventure game than an RPG.

Surprise! It's buggy

Unfortunately Return also suffers from being a bit unstable. To be fair, how long has it been since an RPG was released without bugs? It seems to be an impossible task for developers these days to make bug free RPG's. I would guess it's because of their ever increasing complexity and the tightness of development schedules, and in





Things have come a long way since the days of text adventures. Haven't they?

character statistics manually every time a character goes up a level. There is a variety of different skills to work on and your party of characters are all quite different. The developers play around with you quite a bit during the course of the game, your party gets split up and put back together and at one point one of them splits off for a separate adventure and this helps to break up the linear nature of the game.

Getting there...

The turn based combat system will suit the more laid-back player and is very similar to that found in the earlier Krondor games. You get time to use a bit of strategy and to use all the items and spells that your party has accumulated during the game, pick your nose, scratch your arse and so on. There aren't a huge number of items in the game, com-

pared to Fallout 2 or Diablo, so it isn't hard to equip your party with the best gear. In fact there are only about four or five shops in the whole game which is a bit of a bummer.

Return To Krondor is a fun and engrossing adventure and easily

better than either of its' predecessors. Unfortunately it needs to be much longer and give the player a lot more freedom to actually role play.

George Soropos



comparison to some recent RPG releases I suppose Return isn't that bad. But it's still bad enough to make you curse a few times!

With all these negative comments you're probably wondering why I marked the game so highly. Like a lot of RPG's and adventure games Return's problems can be endured, and the story and gameplay are compelling enough to let you have a good time regardless.

The Lara dis-ease

The graphics are superb, particularly the spell effects, and

because the backdrops are painted not rendered you don't even need a 3D card or a super fast machine to get a great looking game. As with most games of this type there is a bit of problem with the way the cameras change to show you where you are in the scene. If you walk around a corner for example, the camera changes to show you in the new location. Sometimes, admittedly rarely, the camera doesn't change and things can get a bit tricky.

Character development is based on an experience point system and allows you to increase

79%

Category Adventure/RPG
Players 1
Publisher Sierra
Price \$89.95
Rating M
Available Now

For Great looking game with depth and gameplay to match, along with a great story.

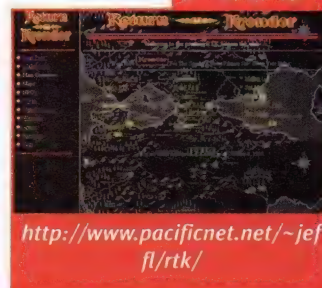
Against Very linear in structure, more like an adventure game. Buggy, camera change problems and well, it's too short.

Need Win 95, 24MB RAM, P166, 4xCD

Want 32 MB RAM, 24xCD

3D SUPPORT
D3D, 3Dfx Glide

PLUS+



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PLAYSTATION



MAC



PC-CDROM



CHAT



SEGA



ARCADE



NINTENDO 64

CYBERSTRIKE 2

Small, fast mechs make for big fun game

The concept of Mech combat did more for me than the actual games ever really did. They promised huge 500 tonne beasts taller than the Eiffel tower, fully loaded with great big missiles and lasers to blow things up. They delivered lumbering beasts that were neither manoeuvrable nor agile, and the slug-like movement of these behemoths stifled any excitement that might come from wielding such towers of mass destruction, and the relatively easy task of taking out the legs of one of these things would cripple it for good in the battlefield, a fact that could never really be escaped. It's a good thing that Cyberstrike 2 is also designed from the ground up for Internet play as well, as it would be a shame to waste the first ever adrenaline inducing mech game on the PC. Cyberstrike 2's server is virtually lagless, even while playing from Australia (the unofficial land of lag), and at near LAN performance, no one can complain.

Something different

Mech combat has finally changed with the introduction of Cyberstrike 2, which is the first 'fast' mech combat game ever designed for the PC. In Cyberstrike 2 you wield much smaller 'cyberpods' which are considerably smaller and damn faster than their larger Mechwarrior cousins. They are everything Mechwarrior purists could hope for, the speed and agility of an Elemental, the raw firepower of the Dire Wolf, and the versatility of the Timberwolf combined. In other words, these things are bloody good fun and brilliant. However there is only one type of Cyberpod, with their variation comes from their modular design. Simply load on your weapons, defensive armaments, and basic functions, with everything allocated on a need-to-arm basis. You may start out with a puny laser, but as you amass credits, you will be able to arm yourself with

hover jets, pulse lasers with addons in themselves (triple shot or spread), rollover missiles (ground skimming!), mortars (a personal favourite of mine) which are like high powered artillery shells lobbed over humungous distances.



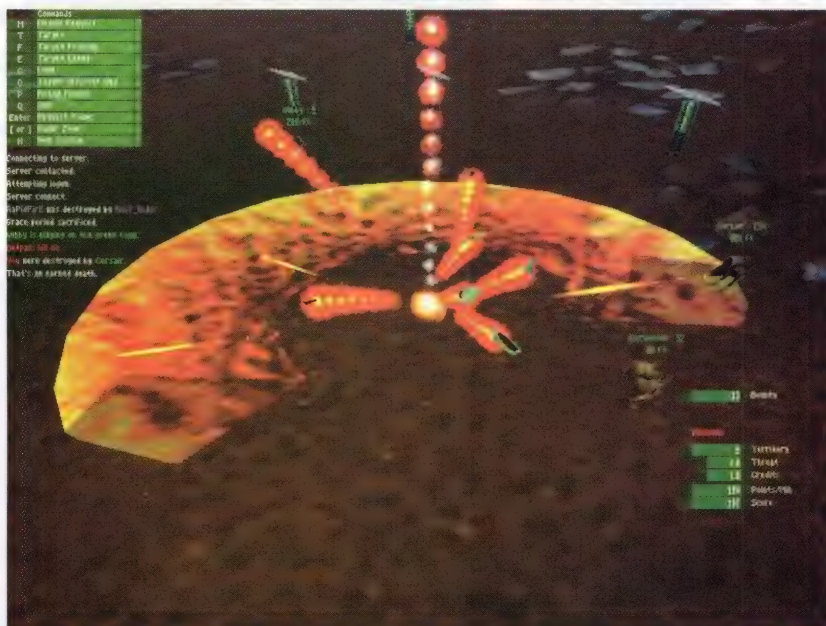
This is not like your average Macha-game. Small, fast, and agile mechs make for a much faster and more enjoyable experience

Smart weaponry

There are also some novel innovations not seen in other mech games such as shield piercing weapons which bypass shields and hit for hull damage directly, cluster mortars that drop little bomblets around surrounding areas, and mine sweeps which implode enemy mines (which a spectacular bang). Modules are not out-fitted at the very start of the mission either, they are quite literally dropped down to you by air support (Ravens), cyberpods wishing to rearm must choose a safe and relatively unknown position as once modules are dropped down, they can be picked up by



anybody! Multiplayer combat has seen many an unsuspecting pod eliminated as the victor descends from a hoverjump to claim the spoils. This type of weapons-on-demand system allows unlimited flexibility on the battlefield where smart players will adapt their armaments dynamically according to the weaknesses of their adversaries.





I have the power!

The power management scheme is also a welcome relief. None of this heat management crap that distracts you from your main objective which is blowing things up. Instead, CyberStrike 2 uses a system where available energy is generated and channelled through a grid of power towers. This energy is pretty much used for everything, including jumping (via hover jets), blasters, shield regenerating, everything. No power, no play.

In Multiplayer, players will soon find their attacking range severely limited to the availability of nearby towers. Maps are huge, and soon players will find that other humans will not always act 'properly', usually rushing off to the nearest enemy dot on the



radar before finding that their power has depleted to piddly levels. This forces clans to work as a team, laying out a consistent power grid as they advance, which if done right will generate roughly as much power as is expended.

Sheer Beauty

My first impression gauged from the back of the box was a generic mech combat knockoff that probably wouldn't be worthy of my attention, but you've just got to see it to appreciate it, CyberStrike 2 quite literally seems to come alive, the damned fine explosions, wide landscapes (or should I say worldsapes), bright and energy pumping weapon glows, the shattering of mortar shells, the chicken legged walking style of the cyberpods, and even the times when they appear to be running are all uniquely breathtaking and satisfying.

The level designers in CyberStrike 2 have truly created some of the best worlds I have ever seen, and I use the term worlds quite literally. These do not feel like confined levels thrown together by texture maps and level editors. Play arenas are overwhelmingly huge environments that unfold wonderfully, seeming to go on forever. The weather conditions are brilliant, clouds are not only translucent but hide light and obscure sun, transitioning as time goes by, fog obscures yet reveals mysterious silhouettes, and it is all put together so naturally that it really does seem like a world of its own. Combat takes place everywhere - on roof tops, inside the corridors of buildings, in abandoned bays, the middle of the desert, and even within mountain crags.

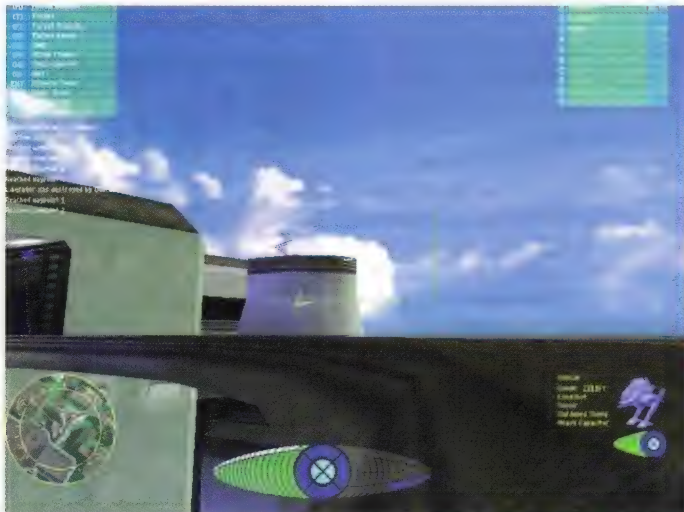
The 'Tower of Power'scheme works really well, making for a nicely tactical game, rather than a simple 'run around and shoot things' game

When you're not online

There are also 25 single player missions for each side to enjoy. The cyberpunk storyline reveals that the MegaCorporations have taken over the world and funded the first colonisation of Mars. However a wormhole has appeared out of nowhere and a probe reveals a world that just cries out for exploration and conquests. Naturally the MegaCorps want more and begin to colonise this new world known as Syren. It becomes a Wild West, one big free for all in an effort to survive as the wormhole collapses and armageddon is suddenly upon them. Everyone forms clans and basically tries to blow each other up. The game is then split into two sides, the good guy Terran Alliance, and the classic evil cult, the Disciples of the Apocalypse. The single player missions, whilst fun, never really grab you, lacking a developing storyline and along with offering nothing to really progress the storyline. The player is never really given control over missions apart from the task to go through nav points, shoot things, and end. The single player game thus becomes just a series of ho-hum search-and-destroy sorties one after the other.

The big BUTS

Okay the very biggest 'but' first. CyberStrike 2 seems to be designed for the hardcore joy-





stick owners in mind. Only with a joystick sporting at least 4 buttons and a hat do the controls make playable sense, and make sure you get one with a strong hat too - I snapped my Wingman Extreme's straight off! The keyboard layout is also incredibly annoying with keys being spread out all over the place, and crucial keys being located in unintuitive places, and worst of all, they're unconfigurable! The combined keyboard and mouse control is the worst I've ever encountered; you are limited to set options and configurations, none of

which address (in my opinion) the largest problem of the game. The up and down (Y) arrow keys can be used for throttle or movement, yet the left and right keys (X) are used to torso twist. The Y axis on the mouse is used to tilt the torso, while the X axis is used to change direction! Mech combat tradition, as well as logic, dictates that you use one for movement, and the other for torso movement. CyberStrike 2 takes the clashing opposites of each, and mixes them up!

Even more annoying are the problems that should have been



What??? A dedicated server for Internet play, but no LAN allowed? What the hell were they thinking?

picked up during beta tests such as logging that only takes place when the player quits. Therefore players can cheat by turning off their computers after they are killed so their death is not recorded. Another blatant sin is the complete absence of LAN play, something which is proving to be a crucial factor in today's gaming, and on top of all that, everyone plays on Simutronics' proprietary lagless server, where limited playability is available in a free account which is limited to a few worlds and random clan battles. However to gain full access a fee of \$9.95 US must be paid. In the age where many multiplayer games are hosted on free gaming servers this is almost unexcusable. However if you can afford the monthly fee, you're in for a treat.

Coulda been a contender

Cyberstrike 2 could have been a contender, it has a few problems, but they are big ones. The big decision lies in whether or not you own or can afford a 'hardcore' joystick or not. If you can, I urge you to take a chance. I wouldn't be surprised if this game turned out to be the future of internet gaming.

Munly Leong



92 PC PowerPlay

PLUS+

CYBERSTRIKE 2

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83%

Category	Mech combat
Players	1-32 (TCP/IP only)
Publisher	Hilad Corporation
Price	\$89.95
Rating	G
Available	Now
For	Damn awesome, lagless server and flawless Internet play
Against	Control system, no LAN support, need to pay for full Internet play
Need	P200, 32MB RAM. DirectX6, 3D accelerator card
Want	28.8K modem for internet play, P266 or higher, 48MB RAM, Joystick is ESSENTIAL
3D SUPPORT	
Direct 3D is supported	

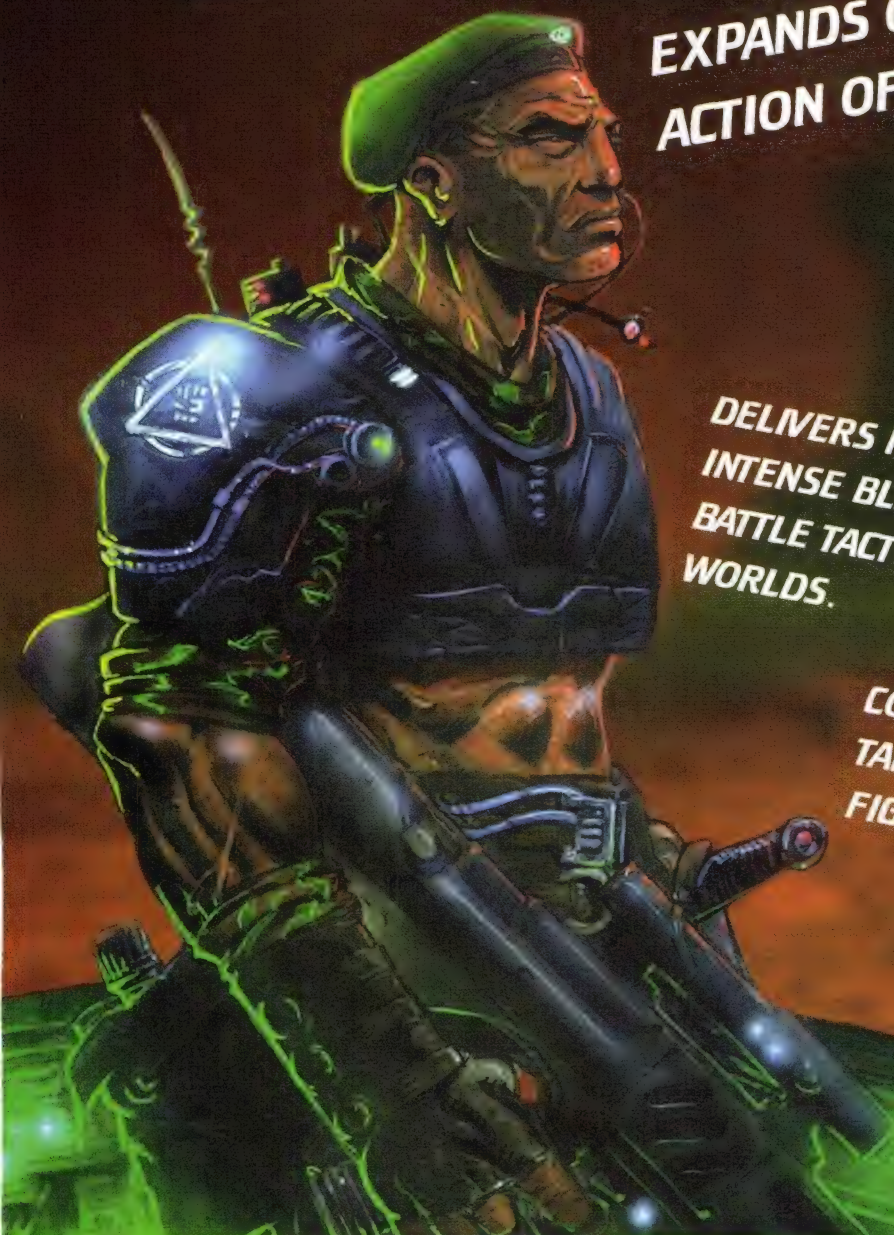
UPRISING² LEAD AND DESTROY

EXPANDS ON THE HEART-POUNDING
ACTION OF THE ORIGINAL



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BATTLE TACTICS - ALL TAKING PLACE IN VAST 3D
WORLDS.

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TANKS, GUNSHIPS AND BOMBERS WHILE
FIGHTING ALONGSIDE YOUR TROOPS



3DO

CYCLONE
STUDIOS



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Directsoft

info@directsoft.com.au

THIS TITLE YET TO BE CLASSIFIED

RED BARON 3D

Finally Sierra are ready to let us "Tally Ho!" in 3D, and there's also a hefty amount of additions and enhancements included

The recent release of titles like European Air War and Jane's WWII Fighters has created a resurgence in interest in historical military simulations. Red Baron 3D's basis on World War I bucks the current WWII flight sim trend, but this may prove fortuitous in differentiating this enjoyable game from the rest of the crowd. Technically, Red Baron 3D is a 3D accelerator support upgrade to Sierra's best selling Red Baron II. However, enough gameplay improvements and enhancements have been made to the product as to almost qualify it as a new game in its own right.

Kill the Baron

At the age of twenty five Manfred Von Richtofen recorded his eightieth kill. Better known as the Red Baron, the infamous Richtofen and his red triplane became synonymous with World War I era aviation. In Red Baron 3D (RB3D) the player assumes

the role of a decorated Ace and represents the last vestige of hope for the ravaged Allied side.

Accurate, detailed

A total of twenty two aircraft types are flyable within the game. Each type's real life advantages and quirks have been accurately modelled, giving each a unique feel in the air. An additional eighteen AI-controlled planes such as fighters and bombers have also been included. Single Missions and Instant Action missions can be flown by those in a hurry, but the Campaign is where this game really excels. The dynamic campaign offers some of the most diverse mission types ever seen in a flight sim. Objectives range from the destruction of bridges to the downing of well-defended bomber formations. Of particular note are missions where enormous reconnaissance balloons are encountered. The floating behemoths are armed to the teeth and backed up by swarms of fighters and ground-based flak guns. The



Now visually splendid, RB3D still features very realistic WWI combat



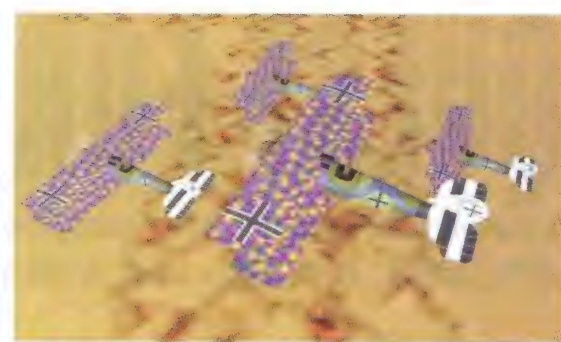
hazardous nature of challenging the floating fortresses makes successfully downing a balloon a true test of a pilot's mettle.

Ring the bells!

Many have commented on the sheer enormity of battles in Microprose's European Air War. Red Baron 3D's battles don't occur on such a grand scale but are equally (if not more) immersive. Aside from the whistling of the wind, many other sounds can be heard because of the open cockpits of the game's planes. On bombing missions, spotters on the ground often glimpse

incoming flights and give advanced warning to nearby towns and airfields. As a result, the player's approach to the Ingress Point (IP) is often accompanied by the wail of air raid sirens, the clanging of church bells and the sight of enemy fighters scrambling from their hangars. High priority targets are also often guarded by battalions of anti-aircraft vehicles. In these cases it is not uncommon for the player to encounter a virtual wall of bullets and flak blocking their path!





The thrill of flying in a massive multiplayer battle with other WWI planes has to be experienced to be believed



Eject! Oh, oops...

Audio plays an integral part in making Red Baron 3D one of the most immersive flight sims ever. At any one time the player is assaulted by a cacophony of sounds ranging from the constant drone of their plane's engine to the staccato cracks of anti-aircraft guns. Players hot on the tail of an adversary will hear the canvas covering the wings and body of the enemy plane tear and the engine falter as both are shredded by a hail of bullets. In WWI pilots did not have the luxury of parachutes so, on occasion, the player may witness pilots bailing out of their stricken planes with a plaintive scream. When witnessing such occurrences, the player cannot help but cringe as bailing pilots impact with the ground.

Trees, eh wot?

The addition of 3D accelerator support has resulted in much smoother visuals and a cleaner package overall. Red Baron II was released over a year ago, so



Red Baron 3D's visuals aren't exactly cutting edge, but they're still more than acceptable. One innovative feature that has been introduced is the player's ability to play the game with a transparent cockpit. This makes the spotting of ground targets much simpler and gives an expanded view of the plane's surroundings. A problem common to 3D-accelerated flight sims is the soupiness of ground textures that makes accurate judging of altitude difficult. Sierra have competently tackled this problem with the

addition of trees scattered liberally across the terrain.

Such a simple measure makes NOE (nap of the earth) flying a much less complicated affair than it has traditionally been.

100 opponents!

Melee, Team Melee, and a "Get the Baron" capture-the-flag style multiplayer modes are supported and free play on WON.net is available. While no provision has been made for cooperative play of Campaign and Single missions, this is eclipsed by the adrenaline rush brought on by participating in Melee and Team Melee battles comprised of up to 100 players. The game's manual also deserves a mention for those with an intellectual interest in the era. A comprehensive summary of the air war occupies much of the manual and provides a valuable insight into the lives and accomplishments of pilots on both Allied and Axis sides.

Free like a bird

Owners of Red Baron II should note that a 100% rebate on Red Baron 3D is available, or a patch that upgrades RBII to RB3D can be downloaded free of charge from the web site listed below in PLUS. Although lacking in the stunning visuals so characteristic of today's flight sims, Red Baron 3D possesses many other positive features that more than make up for this minor shortcoming. Anyone who is growing weary of BVR (beyond visual range) air



combat should seriously consider purchasing this game. Hats off to Sierra for making Red Baron 3D a shining example of the kind of improvements that can be made to an existing title.

Brett Robinson

PLUS⁺

Red Baron 3D

www.redbaron3d.com
Upgrade and rebate info as well as links to dozens of WWI-related web sites

87%

Category Flight Sim
Players 1-100
Publisher Sierra
Price TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For One of the best dynamic campaigns ever, superlative audio that contributes greatly to an almost total suspension of disbelief.

Against Somewhat dated graphics.

Need P133, 32MB RAM, 2xCD

Want P300, 64MB RAM, 10xCD

3D SUPPORT

Glide compatible video card

QUEST FOR GLORY V

Lori Cole hasn't the profile other Sierra stablemates like Roberta Williams, but she can still pump out the classics



Although perhaps the most neglected of Sierra's lengthy line of Quest games, closer examination reveals the Quest For Glory series to be the company's most consistent. Crafting a beguiling mixture of light action and role-playing elements within a typically solid adventure game framework, designer Lori Cole has throughout this decade already explored many of the gameplay avenues her contemporaries are only just discovering. Dragon Fire follows suit and manages to be fresh and exciting without really doing anything different.

Rulership rites

Once again there is a world that needs a hero. King Justinian of Silmara has been assassinated, struck down by a magical, poison-tipped dagger. Hesperian mercenaries have invaded the land, taking first the outlying fishing villages and are now preparing for an assault on the city. Yourself and four others have assembled to contest the Rites of Rulership, a series of quests that will determine who is worthy to assume the throne of Silmara. Competing against you are Elsa von Spielberg (a noble warriorress whom you may remember from the first Quest For Glory), Magnum Opus (a pompous fighter with an ego to match how much you hate him), Kokeeno (brave soldier of the Silmarian guard), and Gort (an



"Your Quest, young Prince, is to get thee some new threads. Thou doth look verily unfunky!"

experiment of the Silmarian scientists, who should be familiar to anyone who has seen 50s sci-fi flick 'The Day The Earth Stood Still'). You need not win all the quests to become king - if, indeed, you wish to become king at all - but you cannot fail too badly or, worse, get yourself killed. There's also a time limit to the quests, although it is quite generous and adds a significant urgency to proceedings.



Choose own adventure

At the outset of the game you have to choose which character you wish to play, whether it be a warrior, wizard, thief or paladin. Players of previous QFG games

can transfer across their old characters if they wish. Like any role-playing game, the selection you make here has an important bearing upon the rest of the game. Your available actions are confined by the initial character class you choose, although certain skills can be adopted at the start and improved throughout the game. Play as a warrior and you will spend much of your time sword-in-hand, solving problems with brute force. A wizard will obviously require a different tack, relying upon a nice range of spells in addition to your own logical dexterity. My first time through the game I played as a thief (a hangover from The Dark Project, I suspect) and immensely enjoyed being able to blackjack a guard, then break into Silmara's bank





and make off with a pile of gold. What I enjoyed even more, when I played again as a Paladin, was discovering a few days into the game that the same bank had been robbed and I was asked to find the perpetrator. This example illustrates one of the key aspects of the game - honour. Paladins must always act honourably, while thieves perform better when they don't. You can see the flexibility the game must provide to cater for both these character types.

Simple, informative

Dragon Fire plays for the most part like a typical point-and-click adventure. The view takes a third-person perspective on the action, while the interface is simple; right-clicking switches between the two mouse pointers - one for walking, talking and performing other actions, the other for looking at people and objects. There's a belt along the bottom of the screen where you store various items for ready use - keys, thieving tools, food, health

potions, etc - and more extensive inventory boxes can be called upon at a keystroke. The majority of the gameplay is also typical adventure fare. All the inhabitants of Silmaria can be spoken to, each offering lengthy conversations that change throughout the game. The voice-acting is uniformly excellent, even though the humour doesn't always hit the mark. Ann, the gnomish owner of the Land Inn, will leave you groaning heavily each time you visit. Gnome Ann's Land Inn, geddit?

Wide open road

Puzzles are mainly of the object-manipulation variety, but they aren't overly taxing or absurdly illogical. Just remember to "role-play" your character - that is, think like a dim, but



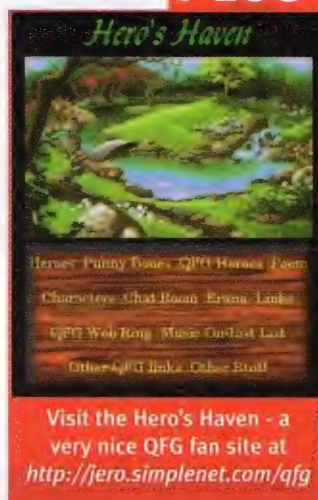
"Your first task is to clean my living room. Please move that inventory bar that's blocking my front door"

tough warrior or a sneaky and conniving thief - and you'll be fine. The combat is pretty simplistic, yet remains fun and brings with it an appropriate sense of danger. Set the difficulty to easy and make sure you have the right weapons or spells and any fights you encounter will prove a breeze. Practising certain actions, like picking locks, pickpocketing, exercising in the Adventurer's Guild, throwing spears or firing arrows at the target range, swimming, or casting spells will improve your abilities over the course of the game. Overall, I think the action and RPG elements complement the main, puzzle-solving adventuring very nicely. When you get stuck somewhere, you can take a break by venturing into the wilderness to clobber some Boarmen, steal money off total strangers in the market, or place bets on the gladiatorial bouts in the Arena. You can even challenge the gladiator champion yourself!

Charmed, I'm sure

As the fifth and, it would

PLUS+



appear to be, final chapter in the Quest For Glory series, Dragon Fire is a worthy conclusion. It has retained all that made the earlier games so good, added an entertaining new story, put a new shine on the graphics, and rewarded us with a damn fine game. The end result is a well-paced adventure, full of possibility and charm.

David Wildgoose

GOLD

90%

Category Adventure/RPG
Players 1
Publisher Sierra
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For A polished and thoroughly enjoyable adventure. Highly flexible gameplay - four characters means four different ways to play. Music and voice-acting are first class. Visuals give a nice panoramic feel to the scenes.

Against The planned multi-player option has been delayed for a future patch. But at the time of writing even this hadn't been confirmed.

Need P166, 32MB RAM, 6xCD, 350MB HD

Want P200, 8xCD

HAVING TROUBLE GETTING PAST THE HARD BITS?

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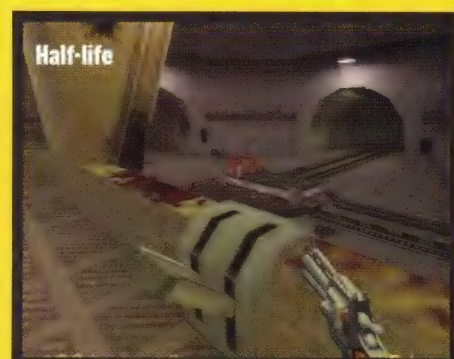
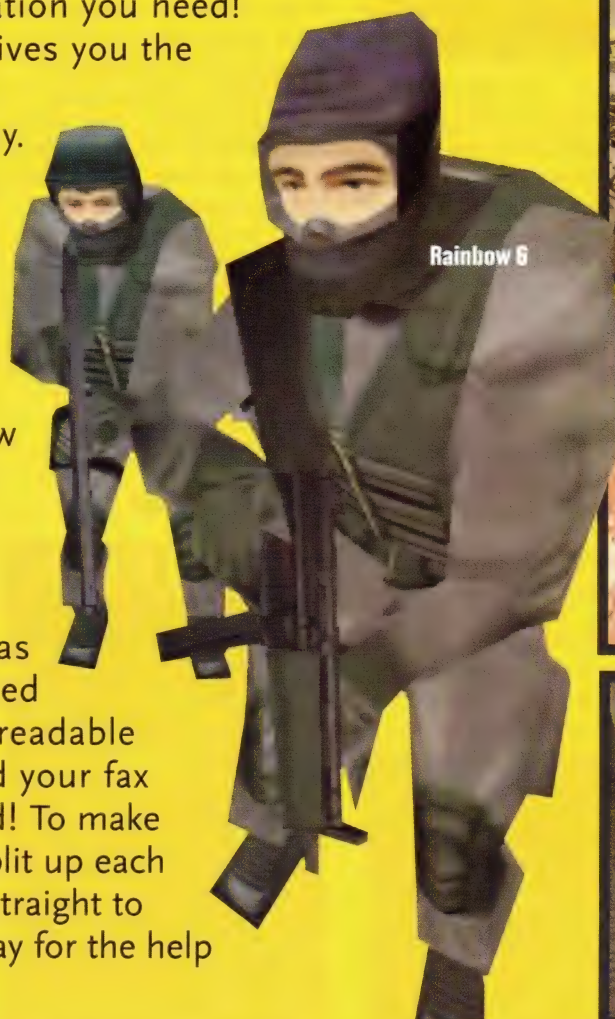
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VIPER RACING

A lovely homage to the 10 cylinder gas guzzling grunty beasts, even though there's only one car available

Sometime in the late Eighties it became obvious to the designers at Dodge that, contrary to popular opinion, the world's oil reserves were far from being depleted and that their massive investment in the petroleum industry was under threat. Dodge needed to find a solution fast and so their designers were given a challenge: Develop a car that will consume so much fuel that it will drain the Middle East of all its oil, not only guaranteeing Dodge's investment but fulfilling their patriotic duty to crush those Camel jockeys once and for all. The first design they came up with was a V36 powered, eight wheel drive sports truck fitted with four super-charged diesel engines to drive the windscreen wipers and a two stroke mower motor with zip cord in each door to make the windows go up and down. This was deemed overly extravagant by Dodge executives who found that they kept punching

their passengers in the head everytime they pulled the zip cord to wind their window down. Eventually the Dodge team came up with the right package, after finding some drawings left by a bored school student on a factory tour, and the V10 Viper was born.

Sierra reborn

So it isn't surprising then that Sierra, the most American of game developers, should choose this classic symbol of American arrogance and waste as the subject of their next racing sim. Coming hot on the heels of the awesome Grand Prix Legends, Viper Racing has a lot to live up to, even though it was developed by a different team. And while it isn't quite on the same level as that title it certainly isn't a return to the bad old days of Sierra development either.



After a stunning win, racer Dick Trickle attempts a 'Pat Cash stadium climb' in his Viper

Options...

There have been very few PC racing sims that have concentrated on just one vehicle; in fact I don't remember any! In this

sense Viper racing is a bit like Porsche Challenge on the Playstation and similarly one has to suspect that Dodge only allowed the project to go ahead as a marketing exercise for them and the Viper. I'm saying this now because if you don't like the Viper, or think that you'd get bored playing a game with only one car type in it then you may as well turn the page!

Win prizes!

From the sim gamer's point of view though, Viper Racing does offer a tricky and difficult challenge. At first the game seems a bit dull as your car doesn't exactly set the tracks on fire. But, again with the Playstation comparisons, if you've played Gran



Turismo you'll understand why. When you begin a game your car is at its most basic level and it's up to you to win prize money to buy upgrades to improve its performance. And there is a lot of room for improvement!

Re-bored

You begin the game with access to three tracks which must be raced in a set order. Points are awarded after the race and you must be in first place after the three tracks to progress to the next stage. The upgrades to your car are also available in stages with parts being restricted until you reach that particular stage. They range from simple tune ups and weight reduction to cylinder rebore and whole new car bodies for improved aerodynamics.

Revhead repetition

The detail in the performance model of the car becomes obvious as you add more and more parts and each one has a noticeable effect on your car's performance and/or handling. I also found that the tracks and competitors are designed so that you have to have all the options for the stage that





Like a record, baby!



Backseat driving grandma

One thing that got up my nose about the game was its nanny style approach to some aspects of gameplay. Single races, no problem. Career races, aargh! The game doesn't let you conveniently save between races, and yes I know this is supposed to make it more 'realistic' but for heaven's sake people want to do it anyway so why not give them the choice? All up this is a good effort from

Sierra but probably only for the hardcore racing simmer.

George Soropos

you are on to be able to finish it. In other words your car has to be fully souped up to complete each stage and that means a lot of racing to build up your cash reserves.

Excellent circuits

The tracks in Viper Racing are one of its best features. They have been designed with the car's handling in mind, not as separate 'ideal' entities, and offer a challenge to the most experienced sim driver. And there is another strength of Viper Racing, it caters to all levels of skill. In the amateur league everyone will be able to get around OK and on the hardest level only nerves of steel and a very steady hand will see you through. This should give the game good replay value, but as I

said before you are stuck with only one car type and you may get bored well before you get to this point anyway.

PLUS⁺

80%

Category	Racing Sim
Players	1-8 (IPX/TCP/direct)
Publisher	Sierra Sports
Price	\$TBA
Rating	G
Available	Now

For Good sim feel with realistic physics and performance characteristics, pretty graphics and good track design. Range of difficulty to suit every player.

Against Too few tracks and too much emphasis on absolute perfection in driving technique. Audio is quite disappointing in its lack of meatiness. And well, you do get sick of driving the same car around all the time.

Need P133, 32Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P233, 3D accelerator

APACHE HAVOC

Whack 'Ride of the Valkyries' into the stereo, pop on your plastic Flak Helmet and get ready to make some heart's dark

Apache Havoc is Empire's thrust into the flight simmers' world where acronyms like VLLTV, FLIR, PNVG, LOAL and IHADSS fly through one's lips with almost as much rapidity as an eight round HYDRA M70 255 salvo! They haven't done a bad job in my opinion; as the sim it tested my mettle at times, and what's more, they've thrown in dynamic missions, some multi-player capability and some future expandability.

Empire thinks

Up front I'd like to say that upon opening the game box I was quite impressed. The game is packaged well with a detailed manual, not up to Jane's standards, but nonetheless quite good. This is complemented by a Keyboard Chart, which immediately shows the detailed avionics embedded in the game. It is also quite clear that Empire put some thought into the keystrokes. They are very similar to Jane's Longbow 2 and Digital Integration's Apache. This is good news for rotary wing simmers because it reduces the mental load when leaning the game.

..But not about MP

However, similarity with other rotary wing sims stops there. The first choice you are confronted with at the Main Menu is whether or not to play standalone or multi-player. I'll address multiplayer in first. As the name suggests, the



Mil-28N Havoc B (Darkhorse One)



(above) The Mil-28N Havoc-B Attack Helicopter at Dawn on a carrier. Watch the flight pattern! The air is alive with moving objects (left) Fly Nap of the Earth in river beds

Before you select which helicopter to fly in, you have three choices. Free Flight is the first, and gives you some practice flying hours in battlespace where hostile air and ground targets don't shoot

Acquisition and Designation System (TADS) or the Havoc's Electro-Optical System (EOS). Once you enter Free Flight, then you choose which helo to fly, and all supporting radio communications take on the appropriate accents.

It's dynamic!

Things really hot up as you enter Dynamic Missions. Once

game pits Apache against Havoc. Unfortunately the manual is really very light on what can be done in multiplayer mode, and how to do it - in fact it covers it all in only half a page. I didn't have the chance to run it up, but it would appear that dynamic missions and campaigns can be undertaken cooperatively and head to head, in teams of one or more on each side. If this is the case, this Apache Havoc should entertain for some time, but the paucity of reference material is unforgivable.

Helping hand

Standalone mode presents another stark paradigm shift in the "game to player" interface.

back! A great place to hone your skills with the Apache's Target





again you select which helo to fly, then up pops the Dynamic Missions Menu which is a live beast! Sit back and watch it. It will give you Intercept, Deep Strike, SEAD, Escort, and Combat Air Patrol missions one minute. Quickly click on one of those, eg, Intercept and a list of intercept missions pop up, and you watch as they pass from starting, to in progress, and finally to completed. As all this is going on, Deep Strike might drop off the main menu and Scout Missions might pop up.



Awesome! Totally dynamic and while the pre-flight briefings are rather skimpy, you do get the option to change waypoints and weapons loadouts, unless the mission is already in progress. If you select a mission already in progress, you just jump in the seat and wham bam, you're in the thick of it!

FARPing about

Campaign Mode follows the same pattern, but also gives you the choice of flying in Cuba, Georgia or the Golden Triangle. It's totally dynamic in the same way as Falcon 4, and missions are related. For example, if you fly a number of times from one FARP, sooner or later you'll have to fly an escort mission from the main base to resupply the FARP!

Windshield wipers

Ground terrain is not stunning by any means, but it is surrounded by a constant wave of war in all three dimensions wherever you go. Often you'll need the cover of deep river ravines from the fire of a infantry held SAM, and other times you'll be watching out for power



(above) The Havoc is not as sophisticated as the Apache, and shown here is the Low Light Level TV locking up a surface vessel for the Ataka radio guided missiles (left) Let loose some HYDRA M70 255 salvos

lines as you cross the country. Weather is also an effect worth mentioning, because rain will often strike in the Golden Triangle, and you'll need to switch on the windshield wipers to clear the rain. Graphically the both aircraft are portrayed beautifully. As they sit with the engines off, the rotors droop. Arc up the engines, engage the rotors and you can watch them spin up. They twist and turn as you move the cyclic (the joystick) and come as you rise or fall; beautiful.

Not for newbies

The flight models don't really seem all that different for either helo, but you can certainly take the Apache through a loop and a roll if you have enough altitude. My major criticism with the flight model is its total lack of support for novice simmers. It only offers realistic flying mode where the pilot must coordinate cyclic with collective in a constant battle to maintain position. This is made all the worse for the realistic

engine torque effects that force the aircraft in the opposite direction to the rotor spin at speeds less than 40 knots. To me this was challenging, but to others it might be all too frustrating. Finally, the game is expandable with a main menu selection called "Special". Empire are intending to leave additional missions on their web site, and this is where you will access them from after download.

By Maj Ian Lindgren

84%

Category Helicopter sim
Players 1-8 (IPX, TCP/IP)
Publisher Empire Interactive
Price \$89.95
Rating G
Available Now

For Dynamic missions and campaigns, and future expandability. The ability to fly two well modelled aircraft in one game

Against It's flight model might just be too realistic for some simmers. The lack of documentation for multiplayer options is a real oversight

Need P166, 64 MB RAM

Want P233, 64 MB RAM

3D SUPPORT
D3D and 3Dfx

PLUS+

Mil Mi-28 Havoc



AT Mi-28 Havoc is a modern combat helicopter able to destroy armoured and unarmoured combat vehicles, low and slow enemy warships and other battlefield targets. The helicopter's design is based on the conventional gun and laser configurations with a tail rotor. The design of this helicopter is similar to the Mil Mi-28 Havoc, which is used by the Russian Army. The design of this helicopter is similar to the Mil Mi-28 Havoc, which is used by the Russian Army. The design of this helicopter is similar to the Mil Mi-28 Havoc, which is used by the Russian Army.

The Russian Helicopters Home Page at
http://www.schlesinger.cz/www_webmaster/military/helicopters/index_en.htm
Has some interesting video and images. It also links you to what's new in European Air War technology.

TOPGUN: Hornet's Nest

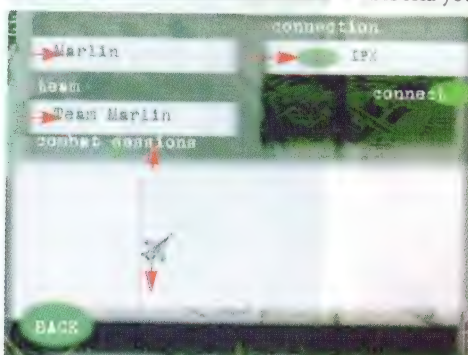
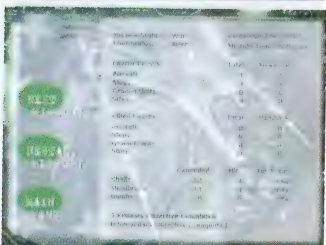
I feel the need, the need for...a comparatively low quality movie rip-off cash-in newbie flight sim. Not.

Well, there's no doubt about it, MicroProse have really put some good products out in the last year with Mi Tank Platoon 2, EAW and now Falcon 4.0. However, with the release of Topgun: Hornet's Nest, MicroProse have really taken a backward step.

You can ride my tail...

Hornet's Nest is the sequel to Topgun: Fire at Will that was released some two to three years ago. It was a real take off of the movie aimed at the younger market, perhaps the novice/arcade simmer. A limited number of canned missions, and yee haa, did it have some good 'ole American fly boy wit, some humour, and it pushed the graphics envelope so much it was on the bleeding edge! Sadly, I couldn't find much of this in

(below) Weapons load out screen with preset air to air and air to ground options. You can change the selections but the interface is confusing.



One saving grace is that when you are using outside views, the cockpit instruments are superimposed to keep your situational awareness.



It's in the can

This time you're out of the venerable F14 Tomcat, and flying the smaller and more manoeuvrable F/A 18 Hornet. The game includes Instant Action, a

limited multiplayer function and three campaigns that aren't! They are in fact three sets of 10 canned missions, and you must pass each mission

Tungsten death

Speaking of ordinance there's some never before seen air to air missiles in Hornet's Nest, the Dart and the Starflower. To the

Hornet's Nest; to me it is Afterburner by MicroProse.

Hokey bad guys

Again you play the part of Maverick, and get hauled out of Top Gun to fly missions in support of the US world interests. In Siberia you take on the renegade

Russian leader, General Martikov who's taken control of Siberia and is now bent on taking over the world. In Iraq, you'll face the militant religious faction, the Ba'al Kistan, and in Colombia, you help against the drug cartels.





The cockpit layout is simple with an easy to master radar that is limited to 10 miles on the left MFD, and a right MFD that can toggle displays. Daytime TV/Satellite imagery shows the target "Locked On".

objects on them had very good detail and held it at all ranges.

On the bright side of things, action commences as soon as you take off, so if you're not the type to sit around and fly to the destination, this game might be for you. The configuration menu also let you turn up the quality of the enemy AI, and they come at you in waves from the ground and the air.

You've lost that...

If you enjoyed Afterburner, play it again in Hornet's Nest, but if you are after the sequel to Topgun: Fire at Will, Hornet's Nest does not continue the legend.

Maj Ian Lindgren



best of my knowledge, these weapons don't exist. However, I know that there is some experimentation going on with tungsten rods that are shot out at upwards of Mach 3-4 without guidance post launch. These shred targets on impact, so it's good to see that the developers used a wide variety of weapons in the game.

Bald guy, cigar - homoerotic?

Sure, I said to myself, it's aimed at the arcade market, but no matter what I did to assume the role of an arcade simmer, I could not get into Hornet's Nest. There's some good FMV with the bald guy from Top Gun (the movie) that's fairly entertaining, but mission briefings are just so basic it's like kindergarten. Waypoints are preset, there's no way of changing them and they aren't even represented on a mission map in the conventional

manner. Again I said to myself, "does an arcade simmer want these qualities?" It's questionable, but then you get into gameplay.

Click...uh?

Gameplay in my opinion starts with the mission briefing and planning, and I've already covered that. Next is weapons loadout. Hornet's Nest has it, in fact it has two standard air to air, and air to ground loadouts. You can re-configure them to your requirements with quite a multitude of weapons. This is good, but I found the interface very confusing.

Slo-mo flying

In cockpit, things are basic, no problem there. Arc up the turbines and you get a pithy little noise that is supposed to sound like twin turbines. No way! Crash through to afterburners and

there's barely a movement of the aircraft, and it gets worse! The feeling of motion once you are up is just so sloooooow, I think I could have walked faster! Flight model?? What flight model, there are three choices in the configuration menu but I couldn't feel any difference in them.

Tough planes

Take a peek from an outside view and there's no moving parts on the airframe. What's more, take a hit, take five hits, and there's no physical damage, no smoke, nor flame, just the right Multi Function Display showing significant damage. Well, no, that really lost it for me; I can't see that many people would find that entertaining! I can't even say that the terrain graphics did much for me. They were bare and dated, however the

PLUS+



I said in the review that Topgun: Hornet's Nest uses some new ordinance. Why not check out the US Navy Web site at <http://www.navy.mil/> and have a close look at the ships, the aircraft, the people, the weapons systems and where they are employed around the world.

65%

Category Arcade flight sim
Players 1-8 (IPX/SPX, TCP/IP)
Publisher MicroProse
Price \$69.95
Rating G
Available Now

For It's easy to play, has a variety of weapons and doesn't cost much

Against It just doesn't have that Topgun lovin' feeling! Too much arcade, not enough flight sim. Inflexible mission parameters, and non-entertaining flight and damage models

Need P166 with 32 MB RAM

Want P200 with 64 MB RAM

3D SUPPORT
D3D and 3Dfx

SUPERBIKE World Championship

Motor Racing fans have GPL, with unprecedented levels of realism, and now Motorcycle fans have their own paradigm

Over the past few months motorsport fanatics have been more than amply catered for with a deluge of car and bike racing games. While the commercial success of titles like *Moto Racer 2* and *Motocross Madness* is undeniable, many gamers expressed interest in the development of serious motorcycle simulations. First to answer the call to arms was *Castrol Superbike World Champions*; a title that was, for many, a godsend.

Like, but better

Sporting (no pun intended) a name that's easily confused with that of its competitor (and some noticeable gameplay similarities) is *Superbike World Championship*. However, *Superbike World Championship* distinguishes itself from *CHSWC* with some notable gameplay improvements.

Easy bits

While purists may shun it, *Arcade* is the mode of choice for newbies who want to get a feel for the game, and those who just want to thrash a bike around and

test its "off-road capabilities" after a hard day at the office. More importantly, *Arcade* mode offers players a chance to learn the layout of each of the tracks minus the distraction of having to worry about proper braking technique and smooth gear changing. A practice mode and an entire racing season are on offer and this portion of the game alone offers excellent value for money.

Hard bits

Simulation mode panders to the tastes of the hardest of the hardcore superbike enthusiasts while still accommodating those who want a game that occupies the middle ground between arcade fun-fest and full-blown simulation. The number of variables that can be altered in the game is simply astounding. Options like the number of laps and opponents in a race and the



Aaaah, excellent graphics, plenty of detail in the gameplay, and some serious simming realism. Finally!

prevailing weather conditions are included as standard. Delving deeper into the Options menu reveals a mind boggling number of settings that affect the game's realism and, consequently, its difficulty. The ability to manually alter the rider's position on the bike (and hence enhance the aerodynamic properties of the bike) is demonstrative of the extreme levels of detail within *Superbike World Championship*.

Teach me

Simulation mode's Practice section is one of the most innovative yet seen in a racing game. As well as allowing the player to race on any track under any conditions, small coloured arches mark out the ideal racing line. This feature is one of the best learning tools ever to be implemented in a racing game, and future titles could certainly benefit from its inclusion.

Detail, detail, detail

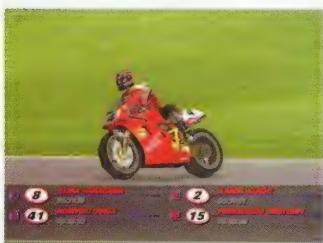
Also included in the *Simulation* mode is a Single Race section. It is, however the *Championship* that offers the



most bang for the player's buck. A technically complex Telemetry section allows the player to compare their most recent performance with past performances. Detailed acceleration, braking, gear shifting and turning data is displayed on tables and graphs in a comprehensive and lucid fashion. Ambient, engine and asphalt temperatures are also displayed and these allow the player to effectively evaluate their driving style and make modifications accordingly.

Got a mechanic?

The Bike Setup section is no less complex and makes *Gran Turismo* on Playstation look childish in comparison. Every bike model featured in the game uses the manufacturer's racing team's real life settings as a default. Transmission sprockets and gear ratios can be altered, as well as suspension and damper





ate on the lower detail settings. The twelve tracks are painstaking recreations of their real life counterparts; right down to the sponsorship banners and billboards that adorn the edge of the asphalt and the overhead bridges.

Don't play drunk

settings. The front and rear tyre compounds can also be interchanged; a particularly important decision as performance is severely inhibited when an inappropriate compound is chosen.

The real thing

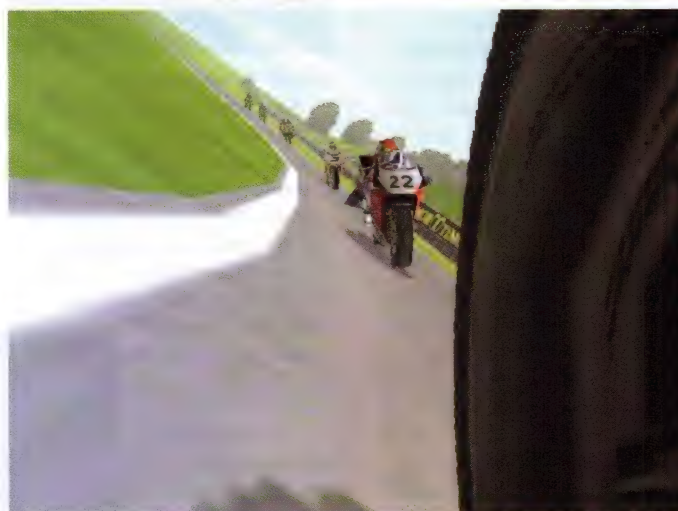
Superbikes from six manufacturers (Ducati, Kawasaki, Honda, Yamaha and Suzuki) are all accurately represented and the player is able to race as any of the real competitors from the 1997 season. Fans of the likes of Carl Fogarty and Akira Yanagawa will be pleased to learn that not only have the competitor's bikes and racing suits been replicated, but the faces of the competitors themselves have been digitised onto their polygon heads. Visually superior to CHSWC, Superbike World Championship (SWC) requires a fairly meaty PC to achieve an acceptable framerate



While the gameplay is quite enjoyable on the lower realism settings, competent play in the ultra realistic Championship mode requires patience and perseverance. Unwavering concentration and precision handling is required, and completing a single lap is a challenge in itself. Superbike World Championship's learning curve is one of the steepest of any game. As a result, it is only with continued practice that players can hope to derive any satisfaction from it. Gruelling twenty three lap races really take their toll but, at their conclusion, the player is left with an unmistakable feeling of achievement and satisfaction.

Imperfect AI

One aspect that deserves a mention is the game's AI. Unlike many games, it is not completely infallible. Because of this, there is enormous potential for horrific accidents that often involve multiple competitors. After such incidents the player is left scratching their head at the miraculous survival of those involved. Also deserving of a mention is the game's reference



One of the most impressive aspects of this whole thing is the fallibility of the AI - they can crash too!

section which features statistics for every track, rider and season since 1988. It also contains accommodation information for those keen enough to hop a flight to see a race in person.

The best

Superbike World Championship is without doubt the most detailed motorcycle simulation to date. While it's learning curve may deter some, with effort the game is extremely rewarding and well worth the price of admission.

Brett Robinson

PLUS+

www.superbike.it
 The Official SBK page packed with the latest news, team stats and race results.

GOLD

91%

Category Bike sim
Players 1- Multi
Publisher Virgin
Price TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For The most realistic superbike sim ever. Pleasing visuals, addictive gameplay and excellent longterm value.

Against Steep learning curve and punishing system requirements.

Need P233, 32MB RAM

Want PIII300, 64MB RAM, 12MB Voodoo2

3D SUPPORT

Direct3D compatible card

TA: Commander Pack

Just when you thought it was safe to start playing another RTS game, along comes the TA Commander Pack

Total Annihilation lovers rejoice, for your religious texts have arrived. That, and a couple of CDs to boot. The Total Annihilation Commander Pack contains the original Total Annihilation, The Core Contingency sequel, the Battle Tactics mission pack (100 extra missions) and the official strategy guide. Yep, more TA than you can poke a Disintegrator Gun at, and enough to saturate your brain cells for the next ten years.

More everything!

For those who so far haven't experienced the brilliance that is TA, this pack is for you. You'll have at your disposal the original game, the expansion pack, extra missions and the complete strategy guide with everything you need to know so you can total your friends in frenzied combat.

Literary tome

For TA loyalists, this should sit on your bookshelf in prime viewing area for friends, parents and girlfriends to admire, gawk at, drool over and generally praise you for your brilliance - just don't let them touch it. If you've never browsed the strategy guide, and chances are that you haven't, this is a fine addition for your literary bookshelf. The information contained therein is that missing edge you've always needed in your TA battles - ever wondered how long it takes to build a Big Bertha with different construction bots? How about the flying speed of a Brawler? Ever tried using the flying roach bomb tactic?

Chris, the master

The guide is broken down into a complete unit guide for both Arm and Core, step by step solutions to all the single player missions, multiplayer strategies, profiles of the TA programmers and an interview with Chris Taylor himself. Lastly, a complete unit and structure statistic guide is thrown in at the back, to give you more inside information than you really care to know.



Gettin' Kroggy wid it

For those players who haven't so far laid their paws on The Core Contingency, this is one upgrade you need. The extra missions and maps are nice, but it's the new units that really breathed new life into TA when TACC hit the shelves. Build underwater nuclear plants, metal makers and enough floating defences to keep safe your burgeoning navy. Take advantage of new units such as hovercraft tanks and transports, or try the seaplanes which have the handy ability to land under water. Then, of course, there's the Krogth. What's the Krogth? Well, this ARM commander lost almost all of his base to a lone Krogth before it was destroyed, and that was WITH a Big Bertha taking pot shots at it. Yeah, mean bastard isn't a strong enough word (there is a word or two stronger, but nothing printable). And it's certainly worth mentioning the Vulcan and its core counterpart - Big Bertha not firing fast enough for you? Try a five barrelled version that can pepper your enemies with a constant stream of artillery. Beauty in action.

Deep pockets?

Is the Total Annihilation Commander Pack worth the dosh? Well, unless you grew up in innocence school, it's completely obvious to you that this pack is, like most wonderful products we pledge our cash to, a marketing stunt designed to make more cash out of a classic game. But this doesn't detract from the brilliance that is TA. If



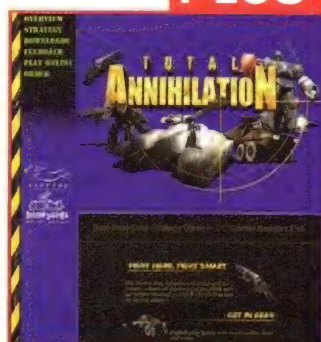
Yes, lovely, new units and fun. The accompanying strategy guide too, is special



you're a newbie, this pack is a very cost effective way of getting everything about the classic game in one handy pack. If you're a fan with cash to spare, it's also an easy way to get the complete series and the rare strategy guide.

Ashton Mills

PLUS+



<http://www.cavedog.com/totala/index.html>

See Cavedog's Total Annihilation site as it is today, filled with strategies and plenty of downloadable stuff.

85%

Category RTS
Players 1-8
Publisher GT Interactive
Price \$79.95
Rating G8+
Available Now

For For newbies or die-hard fans, the TACP is a valuable and worthy purchase. If you're not a TA fan (what on Earth is wrong with you?) or just a mild one, save your cash.

Against What could possibly be against the great TA? Oh, well, a free t-shirt wouldn't have gone astray.

Need P133, 32M RAM, 100M HD space

Want P200, 64M RAM

3D SUPPORT

TA doesn't need 3D hardware acceleration, and yet it still looks awesome!

MS PINBALL ARCADE

Take a tour through the annals of pinball history. Sadly, no Who soundtrack though

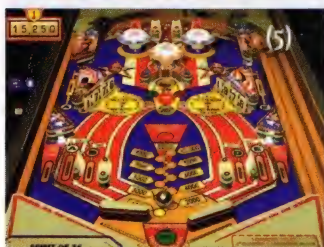
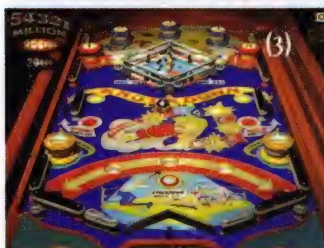
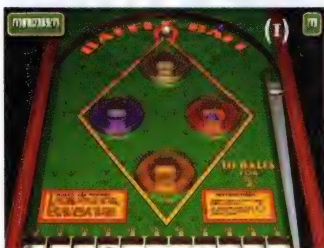
Microsoft have nailed the essence of the pinball experience and presented us with not just one, but six different takes on it. Microsoft Pinball Arcade is an odd title in that it doesn't feature the latest, greatest-designed machine (or machines) to play on. Instead, a table that represents each of the last six decades in the history of the pinball machine is here, all faithful to the real life thing. To help achieve this, Microsoft enlist the aid of none other than the almighty Gottlieb. So you get a collection of pinball machines here in all their authentic glory. It's then a simple matter of picking a table and playing.

Baffle Ball - 1931 (1)

The first "pinball" machine, which surprisingly was flipperless. Players launched the ball, and manually tallied the points according to where the balls lay. The skill was in just how much juice you gave the ball at launch.

Humpty Dumpty - 1947 (2)

A more familiar pinball experience, though for most people still kinda weird. First pinball



game with flippers (six of them in total). Also introduced a reactionary scoring system. First pinball game where the idea was to keep the ball in "play" for as long as possible. A more advanced version of Baffle Ball.

Knock Out - 1950 (3)

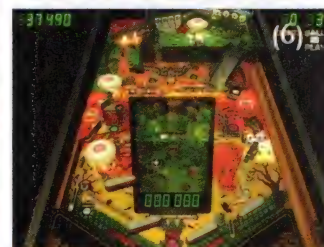
A more modern pinball design, in that the flippers were positioned just above the black hole (ball muncher), with the idea being to both stop losing the ball and to hit score-giving features in a more precise way. The gap between the two flippers results in the ball staying in play for usually only short periods of time. Also, the table top was comparatively empty of any major gameplay features.

Slick Chick - 1963 (4)

Mmmm.. bunnies! Slick Chick brought the flippers closer together and fleshed out scoring devices.

Spirit of '76 - 1976 (5)

Hugely popular pinball machine that again brought the flippers even closer, and introduced "lanes" into the fray. Like Slick Chick, still a fairly empty and lazy table top.



Haunted House - 1982 (6)

Ahh... Many consider this decade as the golden age of the pinball machine. Haunted House introduced different levels to the pinball experience.

Cue Ball Wizard - 1992 (7)

The latest pinball machine - featuring lanes, ramps, multiball and a more complex gameplay system, however it still feels a little aged. Although it's a nineties table, CBW feels and plays like an eighties machine.

As far as capturing the feel of pinball, Pinball Arcade does it fantastically. It's not the strongest title in terms of "pinball gameplay" out there today - Big Race USA still has the edge - but it is only a few steps behind. Same goes for the options list. Pinball Arcade doesn't allow for the same level of tweaking as seen in other pinball titles. It does however make up for this with the most comprehensive help feature seen in a pinball sim. There's a history of each table, as well as

the pinball machine in general. For those new to the "sport" there's an incredibly detailed look at art of playing pinball. You will walk away from this title with a new found confidence in your pinball abilities. Pinball Arcade is perfect for connoisseurs, as well as being a great place to start for those becoming connoisseurs - at any level.

March Stepnik

86%

Category Pinball
Players 1-4 (Same machine)
Publisher Microsoft
Price \$89.95
Rating G
Available Now

For A compendium of the pinball machine through the ages that plays well too

Against Limited options.

Need Win 9x, P90, 16MB RAM

Want P200, 32MB RAM

3D SUPPORT
Software only

PLUS+

Current Pinballs in stock

<http://www.bumper.com.au/pinball.htm>
Go on, you know you want one...

CLUEDO

The, erm, classsic board game finds its way onto the PC in yet another conversion from cash-in masters Hasbro

Miss Scarlet, in the kitchen with the candlestick? It has to be the classic game of Cluedo that we speak of (if not, you need serious help). The classic board game of murder and wit has finally made it to the home PC, animating the many characters, rooms and weapons we have grown to mistrust.

Classic?

Up to 6 can play, and any six can be computer players. Hook it up to LAN, Modem to Modem or over the net, and you can challenge your friends at a game. Choose the classic game, where you must roll the dice, or with auto dice (it's basically the same, but without the dice allows you to move up to nine squares at a time).

Stylish?

From the start the game is stylish. It takes advantage of the period to dress its characters and furnish its rooms. Set in Blackwell Grange in the swinging 1920's, the resident Dr. Black has been murdered. The game is exactly that of the board game - you must work out who dunnit, with what and where.

The butler!

For those of you who've never played before, here's a brief overview: A set of cards with six characters, six weapons and nine rooms has three cards

removed, one from each category. These cards are the who, with what, and where of the game. The remaining cards are split amongst the players, and via deduction of clues on your notepad, you must solve the mystery. Each character takes on a slick 3D image and can walk around the house. Watch the suggestions of possible murderers, each one animated at the side of the screen (one of my favourites is the good Reverend Green with the dagger). Movement around the board is simple and clear with the number of moves made mapped on the squares. Like the board game, no diagonal or backward movement is allowed, and if a player stands in the way of entering or exiting a room, you have to wait till they move. The soundtrack is that of roaring fires and the rain apparently outside of the manor house. The Butler is your guide, reminding you of your turn, and which clues are being made.



It's a bit far removed from such modern day classics, such as 'Gordon Freeman in the Reactor Room with the Laser Guided Rocket Launcher', but you get that.

Deducting marks

My main quibble with this game is the notepad. If you've never played the board version of this, it'll take you a while to get used to the marking, and how to make the most of it on the PC version. The deduction of clues can be a particular pain in the ass if you don't mark in a way that the computer will recognise.

The game can be set with your opponents at three levels of difficulty, from novice to expert which will determine generally how long or how short the game will be.

Being a board game conversion, there isn't any long saga-type missions or mysteries, but it does cater to the quick "just one more game" situation, which is much easier than the "just one more mission" games to break from.

Agata Budinska

71%

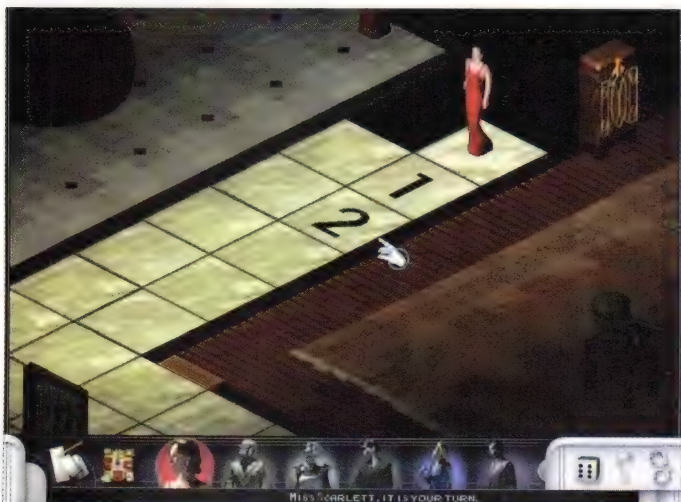
Category Board Game adaptation
Players 1-6
Publisher Hasbro
Price TBA
Rating G 8+
Available Now

For A quickie challenge that can be played over and over

Against A quickie challenge that can be played over and over, with little variations (hell, it's based on a board game).

Need P133, 16MB RAM, Win 9x

Want P166, 32MB RAM



RETRIBUTION: Starcraft Add-on

You'd be a hard core Starcraft freak looking to fill in the gap before Brood Wars is released? This'd be for you, then

There is a strange phenomenon experienced by Starcraft players. It is my proof that even us gamers are just a short step away from being the followers of the day-time soap opera scourge. Starcraft graduates, cast your mind back to the Zerg missions of the original. Remember the mission where you must protect a hatching Cerebrate? There wasn't a man, woman or child who didn't screech like a banshee when the hatched Cerebrate turned out to be the deserted Kerrigan! "No, not Kerrigan! You treacherous Confederate dastards! How could you leave her behind!". Come on, we all said it. The real shock is that it's not a big stretch from this to: "Previously, on Days of our Starcraft..."

History lessons

The point I'm making is that one of the reasons Starcraft made such an impression mid 1998 was because of a strong narrative drive to the game. Blizzard had been getting experience in making great games such as Warcraft I & II and Diablo. Warcraft, for many gamers was their first experience of Real Time Strategy, and it really caught on. Bravo Blizzard. The combination of quality gameplay, an intriguing narrative, nay saga, and multiplay made Starcraft a stand out title of the year.



Expansion...levels

Now some months down the line we see the first of the official expansion packs: Retribution. To be frank, it's not really an expansion pack as much as additional levels for Starcraft, both single player missions and multiplayer levels. There's a long history of second rate expansion packs, so gamers are wise to be sceptical of such things. Retribution has a lot to live up to, considering Starcraft's reputation and it doesn't do too badly.

It's hard

Retribution is most definitely not for the beginner. If you haven't completed all of the original, don't even bother. There is absolutely no learning curve in this add-on. At the beginning of a standard battle-type scenario, your opponent(s) will be spread out, developed and armed to the teeth. In most cases, the odds are stacked firmly against you. This isn't necessarily a flaw - expansions packs need to be more challenging than the original. But please, be ready for long, logistical wars - each level requiring clever planning and many battles.

There is a fair variety in gameplay much like the original: battle scenarios, evacuations and defensive missions. In at least one mission, you have a choice of objectives for victory, which is a nice touch. A big bonus in Retribution is the vast number of multiplayer levels. There are 120 of them and this may be its strongest selling point.

No soapie stories

There are some flaws, however. The story of Retribution is a bit thin and involves some hoovey about the Argus Stone, an artefact of both Zerg and Protoss legend. The characters of the original game do not appear and



More levels and no storyline do not an "expansion pack" make, but still, it's more Starcraft, so it's not all bad

mand and nothing else really new either. Blizzard's official expansion pack to Starcraft, Brood Wars is just on the horizon, promising a swag of new units and features. Retribution will probably get lost in the rush. It is a solid add-on to a great game but it's really only for the absolute fanatic.

John Dewhurst



sadly characterisations are distinctly lacking. So if that whole bit about Kerrigan left you scratching your head and wondering what all the fuss was about, then don't worry. If the battle is everything, Retribution is probably your thing.

As stated, Retribution is not really an expansion pack. There are no new units to com-

PLUS+



www.blizzard.com/broodwar/
See what's up with Brood Wars and Kerrigan, Queen of Blades (ooh la la...)

71%

Category RTS
Players 1- 8 (IPX & Battle.net)
Publisher GT Interactive
Price TBA
Rating M 15+
Available Now

For Big, long missions for the beloved Starcraft, 120 multiplayer levels.

Against No new units, no story, no cut scenes, will be followed closely by Brood Wars.

Need A copy of Starcraft, P90, 16MB RAM

Want P133, not much more

DEER AVENGER

The enjoyment may be short-lived, but if ever a game was needed... it was this

Players: 1
Developer: Simon & Schuster Interactive
Price: \$TBA
Need: P90, 16MB RAM

This is in such bad taste. What kind of a person could have devised a game where you ran around as an animal and shot at harmless human beings? Sure, the humans are hooning about the place, probably drunk and carrying weapons, but does that give us the right to hunt them down and shoot them in cold blood? For that's what Deer Avenger is all about. You play a deer, decked out in the latest camo gear, out to shoot "God's almighty creation" (albeit that lowest echelon of the gene pool,

but still) with all manner of things that go pop. How utterly disgusting! I'm offended!

And it's hardly a title bursting at the seams with features. Deer can only wield three weapons - the M-16, the Slingshot, and the Bazooka. The locations are inherently dull, and the 3D movement engine is slow and cumbersome at best. Sure, it's almost exactly like the other legitimate hunting games out there, but that's not the point.

The Funny Bits

Okay. When you observe that this may in fact be a parody of the immensely popular Deer Hunter (it helpfully states this ever so clearly on the front of the box), you may be able to accept the humour of the title.



Only, perhaps, if you're a total deadbeat. A dead-beat because, the writers have gotten almost ALL aspects of hunting wrong. For example, the deer use calls such as "Oh look, Baywatch is on tv!", "Get your free Viagra here!" and "Help, I'm naked and have a pizza" to lure the hunters within their gun sights.

Firstly, not all hunters find the babes of Baywatch attractive - what about the many other types of female forms out there, like Tanya Zaetta? Secondly, Viagra is hardly at all appealing to us - why do you think we took up hunting - is it any coincidence that guns are shaped that way? I think not. Thirdly, we wouldn't jump at naked women, in forests - especially if they have free pizza. Why, you ask? Why do you think we started hunting in the first place? It was to break the monotony of too much pizza, crappy moonshine, and cheap and nasty porn from the couch every night.

Great Death, dude

Then there's the annoying taunting that comes when you fail to shoot a human within the first ten seconds of it appearing on screen. Something along the lines of "You're meant to kill the bastards, not let them get away!" is said. Not only is this insulting, it's distracting. Any real hunter would know that there are two reasons why we take our time pulling the trigger. First of all, we have to make sure we'll actually hit the buggar, and secondly - the later you pull the trigger the longer you have to savour watching your target takes its last few breaths before you terminate its life. Woo



Like most 'hunting' games, this one's mostly a tree-watching exercise

yeah! Hunting IS a sport.

So it seems we have somebody here that thinks he's a bit of a wise guy. Most of you wouldn't have heard of him - as he's a writer for the Late Night Show with Conan O'Brien, which is a show we no-normies (hemishperers) don't get on our tv screens. We've been assured that Brian McCann is one of those people that under the guise of "comedy", thinks he can undermine EVERYTHING that has made this very country what it is today. He's launched an attack on our personal freedoms and liberties. All we want is to be able to stalk the forests and terminate the lives of other living beings without being called meanie names. It's not as if we don't already have pinko lefty commie vegetarian hippies giving us a headache - now we may start getting gamers on our case too.

March Stepnik

QUAKE II - Net Extremities

Everything you'll ever need to play Quake2 plus lots more at a bargain price, all fully endorsed by the lads at id

I know what you're thinking. We've seen all this before. Some dodgy little pissant of a company steals a few deathmatch levels then whacks together a CD and releases it as a "Quake 2 add-on". They then get their sorry asses sued and you're stuck without support and a product that's really worth \$2.50.

Not from Microstar

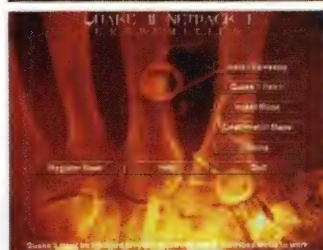
Well this is not the case at all. This is the real deal, quality stuff you might say. Extremities is an official id add-on and contains pretty much everything you'd ever need to play Quake 2 on the net, and then adds a hell of a lot more.

For starters, the pack includes the full version of Gamespy 2.05, which is a great program that allows you to find almost every Quake 2 server in the world, and then connect to the fastest one. A nice little bonus there. Extremities includes the final upgrade for Quake 2, version 3.20 so you won't have to worry about downloading the 20 or so megs from the Net.

For those people that still haven't quite progressed past deathmatching, there are stacks of some of the best deathmatch maps ever made. And if you're sick of being human, why not choose some of the new player models included?

Mod city, baby!

But the real meat in the proverbial sandwich is the Mods that are included in this package. For those of you living under a small stone for the past two years, a Mod is a modification of the existing game to make it a different game or to change the rules slightly. Extremities includes pretty much all the major Mods you'd find on any deathmatch server, all with the latest versions at the time, which is a pretty impressive effort. There are ten Mods included and I'd highly recommended Action Quake and CHAOS, both of which completely change the weapons and power-ups available in the game. Also worth checking out are the ones that completely change the way Quake 2 is played,



like Kick, which is basically Quake soccer and Qwarz, a Real Time Strategy variant for Quake 2 (who would have ever thought).

If you get stuck at any point, there's some excellent HTML-based help, which includes detailed readme's for all of the Mods, plus a breakdown of everything else included on the CD.

Erasing friends

Best of all, the pack also includes the Eraser bot so that if your name is Jimmy No-friends you don't need to make friends online; you just launch the Eraser bot and play against a computer AI foe that is probably smarter and definitely smells nicer than your friends anyway.

All of this comes in a nice, user-friendly front end with buttons that you click on to select what you want to install. Nothing



could be easier to get you playing Quake 2 or your favourite Quake 2 Mod on the net.

Losers@LANs

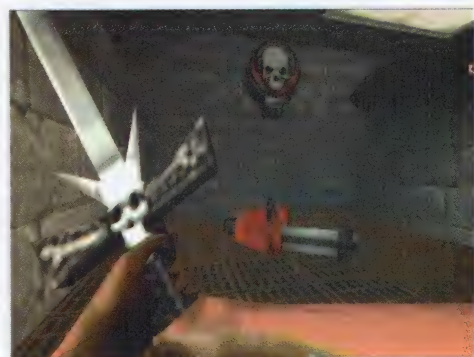
Think about the time you'd save at LAN parties. Forget about some tool coming along with Quake 2 version 3.05 without a single Mod to his name - pass the CD around to everyone (it's legal too, I might add) and within minutes everyone is playing the same version of the same Mods. Granted, all of this stuff (except Gamespy full version) is available for free on the net, but if you're a net or computer newbie, getting the files, installing them and configuring them



This isn't ripping off the designers of the Mods and additions either - the lads at id are making sure they receive money for their efforts

can sometimes be quite daunting. Anyways, how long do you think it would take you to download 370MB of data? This package does it all for you and for \$29.95 bucks, it's truly a worthwhile purchase.

George Argy



GAMEPLAY

AIR COMBAT MANOEUVRES

Is the Bernoulli Effect getting you down? Don't know your Immelman's from your VIFFing? The Major's the master of virtual flying, and he's ready to tell all





The USAF Advanced Technology Anti-G Suit (ATAGS), is a full coverage uniform pressure system designed to more effectively prevent pooling of blood in the lower body

Do you have what it takes to go head to head with a computer controlled or human bogey in a combat flight simulation? Well, whether you do or don't, let's take a stroll through what's required if you want to fight and fly the virtual skies in props, jets and helicopters. We'll go back to the basics for a moment, then move through some Basic Fighter Manoeuvres in props and jets, and finally have a quick look to NOE helicopter flying.

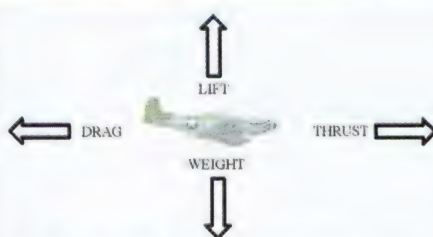


Fig.1 The four Forces Acting on any Aircraft

The Basics of Flight

I'm sure this baffled Wilbur and Orville Wright for a couple of years, but a thorough understanding of the basics of flight is a must, because whatever you do in the air relates to Isaac Newton's "gravity thing". That being true in real life, it's also the case in a flight simulation. When you move into the realistic modes of play in games like Jane's F15 and MicroProse's Falcon 4, we pay big money for the gaming companies to get it right. A simple understanding of what's happening to the aircraft during flight can really help your gaming enjoyment.

An aircraft flies because four forces keep it in the air as shown in Figure 1. Two forces assist flight (thrust and lift), and two fight against flight (gravity and drag). For an aircraft to fly straight and level, all four forces must be equal. If it is to climb, the combination of thrust and lift must be greater than gravity and drag, and if they're not, you fall! Simple, but it's amazing how many pilots crash while focussing on a bogey and failing to watch the ground. This is why most flight sims offer a "No Crash" toggle, and here are a couple of things to remember about each.

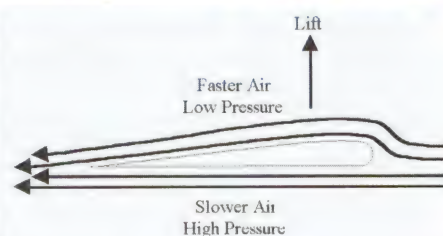


Fig.2 The Bernoulli Effect

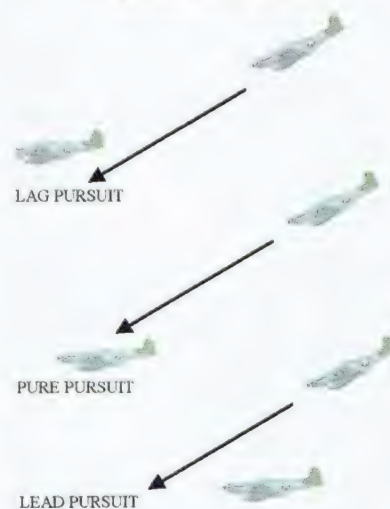


Figure 3 - Attack Geometry

Thrust

Thrust is created by an engine and turned into a force by a propeller, a rotor blade or a jet engine. Fighter aircraft engines are described in general by "thrust to weight ratio" which compares the thrust of the engine to the weight of the aircraft. The higher the ratio, the more powerful the aircraft. Most jet combat aircraft have between 0.7 to 0.9 thrust to weight ratio. The F-15 and F-16 fighters have a thrust to weight ratio of greater than 1.0 which allows them to climb vertically. Keep this in mind when selecting aircraft in a multiplayer game; it may be the thing that keeps you in the offensive position and can usually be found in the detailed characteristics section for each aircraft.

Lift

Lift, or the Bernoulli Effect, occurs when air passes over a surface faster on the top than on the bottom of the surface. Two good things to remember about this are that in a turn, the lift is less on the lower wing, so compensate and pull the nose up a little. Secondly, if you are inverted, lift works the other way and pushes you towards the ground!

Gravity

Also known as the Isaac Newton thing; it keeps you stuck to the ground unless you jump up. It's a constant force and only acts one way - downward. If you are flying with all cheats turned off, red-out and blackout-out are effects that can effect your flying ability and



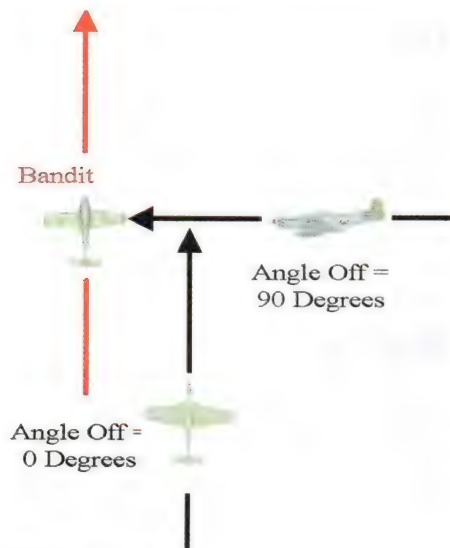
Pull the nose up gently as you turn or Gravity and weight will pull you down

A.C.M



This Falcon has significant drag with its Air to Ground Stores..and it is unbalanced after dropping one dumb bomb!

both are caused by a combination of Gravitational Force, or G Force. Many sims are good at reminding you that this phenomenon occurs to all real pilots. All that blood pumping through your head works really well at 1G, ie normal gravitational force, but put your body under positive or negative Gs and woa -it's time for a scaary acid flashback, man.



G-Force

If you are in normal level flight and pull back on the stick hard, your body will follow the aircraft (because it's strapped in), but your blood will still want to go the direction it was going before, ie straight ahead. The result; lots of blood in the lower body and not much in the brain. This is known as black-out and a flight sim's screen will usually simulate you fainting until you level out. If, on the other hand you push forward on the stick, and the aircraft starts to fall, blood will rush to your head. This is Red-out and you will usually have your vision increasingly impaired by redness. Toggling on these items in a sim will make you experience flying in a more realistic manner, but it will also make it increasingly dangerous.

Drag

Nothing to do with Priscilla Queen of the Desert, daaahling! Drag is the force that opposes thrust. It is basically friction, the resistance of air against the structure of the aircraft, and this includes anything that you attach to it such as missiles, bombs etc, or anything that upsets the airflow such as the air brake. The thing to remember is that the

more drag you impose on an aircraft, the worse it will respond. So, even though you might have sufficient stores to carry out an air to surface mission, if you get in a tangle with no air cover, jettison all the air to surface stores or you won't have a chance.

Basic Fighter Manoeuvres

Ok, a bit of a refresher on the basics, now let's look at the terminology used in Basic Fighter Manoeuvres (BFM). There are two areas, Positional Geometry and Attack Geometry.

Positional Geometry

The two terms, Angle Off and Range are the common terms used when describing the relative position of one aircraft over another.

Angle Off

Angle Off is the difference between your heading and that of the other aircraft and is measured in degrees. If you and your bandit

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Worms Armageddon:
Humorous; Annoying;
Innovative; Emotional; and
most of all it's pure Gameplay.



CD-ROM

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A.C.M

are heading in the same direction, you would be at an Angle Off of 0. In a jet fighter, the closer to 0 degrees you can get, the better chance you have of a missile shot because, amongst other things, any jinking the bogey does will be more easily tracked by the missile.

Range. Range is the distance between your aircraft and the bogey. In most flight sims it is displayed in feet and/or miles. However, European aircraft such as MiG-29s

and SU-27s will use a metric measurement. Keep this in mind and be aware of what measurement system the sim uses because it will effect you perspective in things such as guns attacks and landing.

Attack Geometry

Attack Geometry describes your Offensive aircraft's flight path to its target as shown in Figure 3. Very simply, if you are pointing behind your target aircraft, you are in Lag



The Safest Way to Engage - Let the sights fall from the nose to the tail



The Break Turn

Pursuit. If you are pointing at the target, you are in Pure Pursuit. If your nose is pointing in front of the target, you are in Lead Pursuit.

Lag Pursuit

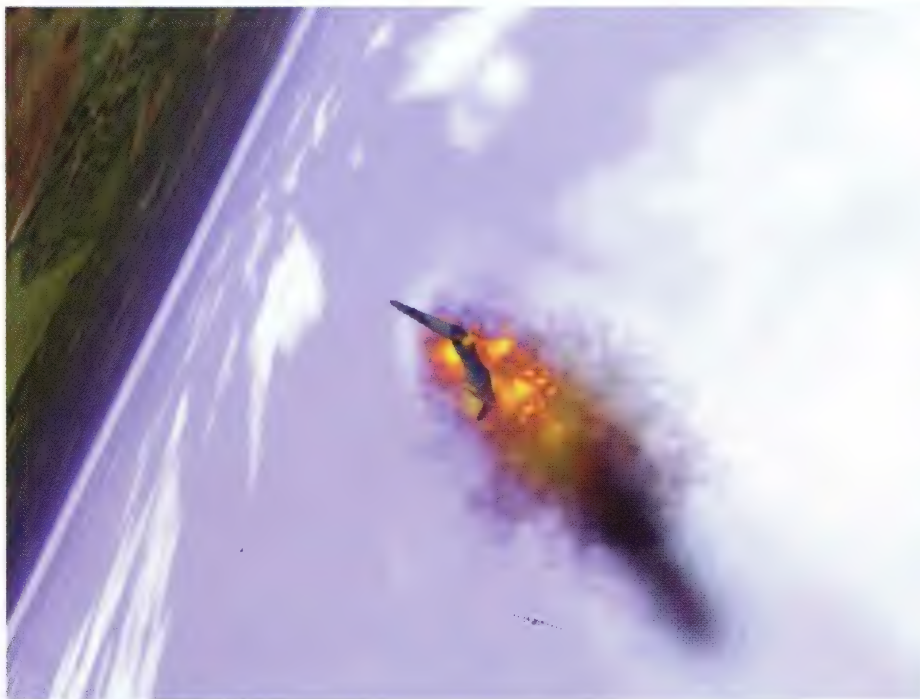
Lag Pursuit is used for approaching the target, however, to fly Lag Pursuit for any extended length of time, you must be able to out-turn the target, or he will out-turn you. If you can out-turn him, rake him from tail to head as you move from lag, to pure, and then to lead pursuit.

Pure Pursuit

Pure Pursuit is exactly that; keep your nose on the target and fly straight at him. In a close up guns fight, it's the best way to overshoot, and a good reason why you should never adopt this Attack Geometry until you are ready to shoot! However, in a jet fighter, you should use this Geometry for the best missile shots.

Lead Pursuit

Lead Pursuit is the quickest way to the bogey, the quickest way to get in range, and the quickest way to overshoot. Only move into this position when you are sure you will not overshoot, then let the bogey fly right on through the rounds! Often, you will find that during the course of a dogfight, you will



But if you do rake the bogey, make sure you kill him and don't overshoot as in this shoot, where the Spitfire will soon have the ME 109 on his tail if he inverts!

move from lag, to pure, to lead pursuit many times as you strive to make the kill.

Offensive Flight Manoeuvres

Now that you've had refresher training in physics and geometry, let's put it together with three basic Offensive Flight Manoeuvres; in other words, what you need to do to kill the bogey. It's a control thing;

you must maintain control of the air battle with smooth movements that account for maintaining thrust and lift, and put you in the position of advantage.

The Break Turn

The break turn is life saving if an attacker is moving to your six and should put you from the defensive to the offensive very quickly. Break hard in the direction the attacker is approaching as shown in the three images. This sudden movement will make the attacker think he is about to overshoot, and you should immediately turn to his six.



The Immelman

The Immelman.

This is a high thrust manoeuvre that increases your altitude and changes your direction in one. Offensively, if a bogey is above you, and headed towards you, wait until he is above you and execute the Immelman by pulling sharply back on the stick and rolling into a suitable Attack Geometry position at the top of the half loop and engage.

The Split S

This aggressive manoeuvre is the opposite of the Immelman and places you on the tail of a bogey passing below you in the opposite direction. Beware, because you will have to watch your speed as you may easily overshoot.

Down and Dirty!

Let's wrap this element with some quick revision on gun kills and bombing.

The Gun Funnel

The Gun Funnel is one of the selectable

A.C.M



modern jet fighter gun sights, and I think it's about the most exciting. The aim is to close on the bogey at under a mile, then move closer until the funnel wraps nicely over the wings of the bogey. Fire and you are sure of a kill.

Bombing

Bombing a target with the primitive sights of a WWII P51 or modern computer assistance in a F15 does have a basic similarity -if you want to succeed; you must plan. You must know where the target is, what it is doing, and what is the longest length. The latter is the area where you will have the greatest success. For example if dropping a stick of Durandals on an airfield, check it out first and

know the direction it runs, such as 000 degrees. Plan your ingress from that direction, or 180 degrees (the opposite, obviously). The three accompanying shots show a Falcon 4 Durandal drop along the length of a runway, and two shots of a P51 bombing a train.

Apache! Comanche! Hind!

Finally, let's look at the basic helicopter flight skill to round out this article.

Nap of the Earth Flying (NOE)

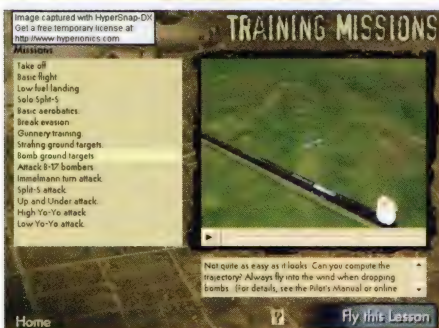
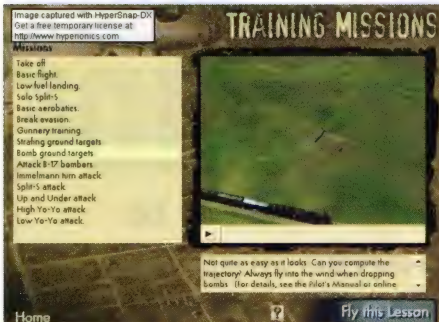
One of the helicopter pilot's priorities when flying in enemy territory is to avoid being spotted. Evading detection is not always easy considering the recent advances in radar and infra-red scanning systems, and the best method of evasion is the use of terrain as natural cover. This is called NOE Flying. NOE flight is usually conducted at around 20 feet (altitude above ground) and 50 knots airspeed. Mission routes for modern-day helos call upon relief maps of the local area to find possi-



The Split S



A.C.M



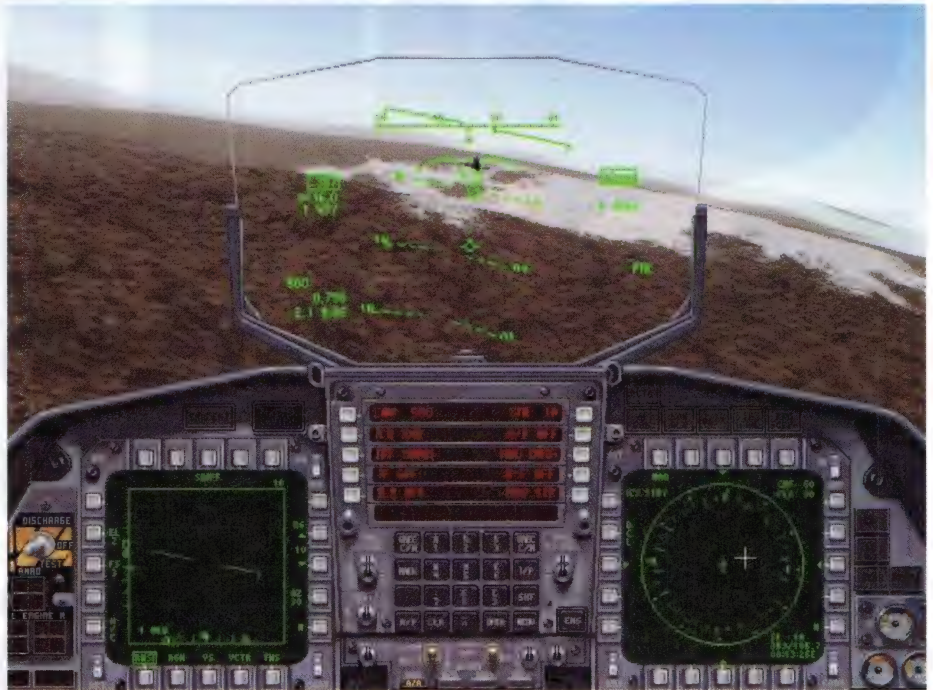
Successful Train bombing

ble screening cover. Paths are designated through foothills, around mountains and behind cluttered terrain. The pilot then has the task of trying to manoeuvre in and around these barriers without crashing into them.

Keep on Reading and Flying

Well, I hope that has refreshed you on Basic Fighter Manoeuvres, Offensive Flight Manoeuvres, Guns Kills, Bombing and NOE. The only way to master the virtual sky is to read and fly - practice makes perfect. Understand what it is you are doing and the forces acting on the aircraft and in the end you will succeed, and you'll also have a lot of fun along the way.

Maj Ian Lindgren



The Gun funnel of (top) an F-15 and (above) an SU27



An Apaches moving on the six of two Hinds!

SIN

PLAYGUIDE

Walkthrough be damned, the journey of discovery is yours to behold - but these survival tips you need. By George Argy

Despite being plagued with bugs in the initial release, Sin still ranks up there as one of last year's best 3D shooters. The level of interactivity, new features and optimisation of an already proven 3D engine serves to make Sin an eminently playable game. But playing is one thing, perfecting is another. In some respects Sin plays similarly to Quake 2 so that the skills garnered from the latter title will help you in the former. But Sin's enemies are no brainless Strogg - they'll cut you down before you can ask them if they'd mind standing still so you can practice your headshots. Similarly, without exploiting Sin's locational damage, armour and weapon effects, no matter how good you are with that strafe key, you will be humbled in deathmatch.

Fear not gentle Powerplay reader, for I have been given the arduous task of playing Sin until I can make out Elexis' bra size from 200 metres away. This, and other essential secrets, it is my pleasure to divulge...

Weapons

Sin's weapons will be immediately comfortable for the FPS veteran. While the first few are nothing original, a few weapons and weapon effects we haven't seen before need a bit of study before they can be used effectively in combat. Some weapons have secondary fire modes, so you will need to bind a second key to be able to switch weapon modes. Note that the damage statistics below assume a point-blank shot to the mid-section - actual damage will vary depending on where you hit someone, so do not take the figure quoted below as law. This aspect of the game is discussed in depth in the multiplayer strategy section.

Fists

That's right, John R. Blade is trained in the obscure art of punchy-kicky, and can deliver fatal blows to his enemies up close.

Unfortunately, this means your usually be-weaponed enemies don't have to aim as much, either. Use your fists when you're out of ammo or when you need to sneak up on someone and kill them quietly.

Hotkey: 1

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Fists

Primary Fire Mode Damage: 20

Secondary Fire Mode Effect: n/a

Secondary Fire Mode

Damage: n/a

Effective Range: Point-blank only

Instant Hit/Lead: Instant Hit

Ammo: n/a

Ammo per shot: n/a

Max Ammo: n/a

Magnum

Hardcorps standard automatic pistol. Packs a punch, but watch the clip reloading - the magnum holds a 15 round clip that takes approximately 1 second to reload. Make sure you keep your eye on the ammo meter and don't get confused between amount of ammo remaining in the current clip, and the amount of total clips (ammo remaining in the clip is the smaller font).

Hotkey: 2

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Bullets

Primary Fire Mode Damage: 20

Secondary Fire Mode Effect: n/a

Secondary Fire Mode Damage: n/a

Effective Range: Short, medium or long

Instant Hit/Lead: Instant Hit

Ammo: Bullets

Ammo per shot: 1

Max Ammo: 500 (15 in clip)

Shotgun

Ahh, that's better. A broomstick that delivers the same kind of boom as the one in



FISTS



MAGNUM

Doom. In close proximity this puppy is lethal. Not very effective for more than about 30 metres out though, as the spread means only a couple of pellets might hit your quarry.

Hotkey: 3

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Spread of pellets

Primary Fire Mode Damage: 180

Secondary Fire Mode Effect: n/a

Secondary Fire Mode Damage: n/a

Effective Range: Short or medium

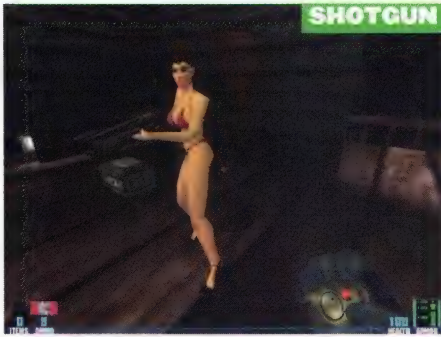
Instant Hit/Lead: Instant Hit

Ammo: Shells

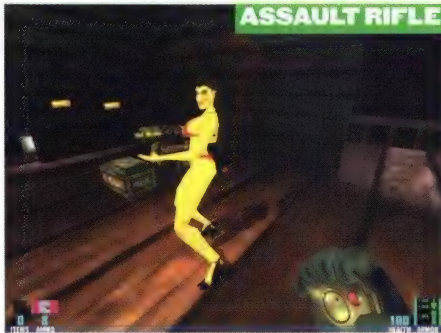
Ammo per shot: 1

Max Ammo: 50

SIN



SHOTGUN



ASSAULT RIFLE



ROCKET LAUNCHER



HEAVY CHAINGUN

Assault Rifle

Now this is more like it. Go toe-to-toe with another foe (why am I constantly rhyming) in the streets with this little number and you'll be getting flashbacks of the lower east side of, erm, some particularly dangerous city somewhere. The assault rifle also relies on clips so watch your ammo count and be prepared to duck behind a wall or a crate to reload.

Hotkey: 4

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Bullets

Primary Fire Mode Damage: 20

Secondary Fire Mode Effect: n/a

Secondary Fire Mode Damage: n/a

Effective Range: Short or medium

Instant Hit/Lead: Instant Hit

Ammo: Bullets

Ammo per shot: 1

Max Ammo: 500 (45 in clip)

Heavy Chaingun/Grenade Launcher

A powerful weapon in close to medium quarters, the Heavy Chaingun rips off rounds like they're going out of style and is chain-fed which means no reloading. This is a down-

side too, as you'll often find yourself firing till you're out of ammo rather than firing in short, sharp bursts like Hicks told you to. The alternative fire mode launches grenades that explode on impact with a foe, or after 3 seconds - whichever comes first. The only downside to the cool factor of having an over-under configuration like this is that you have to switch between gun modes rather than just pressing a secondary fire key, so you'll have to find some cover before you switch to the

Grenade Launcher.

Hotkey: 5

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Rapid-fire bullets

Primary Fire Mode Damage: 25

Secondary Fire Mode Effect: Grenades

Secondary Fire Mode Damage: 80

Effective Range: Short, medium or long / medium for Grenade Launcher

Instant Hit/Lead: Instant Hit / lead for Grenade Launcher

Ammo: 50mm Bullets / CB-40 Shells

Ammo per shot: 1

Max Ammo: 500 50mm Bullets / 100 CB-40 Shells

Spider Mines

Spider Mines are a nifty little fire-and-somewhat-forget weapon that are a little reminiscent of Duke Nukem. You use them by targeting an opponent and then pressing the fire button - the mine will scurry over to your opponent and attach itself to their leg. You then depress the little remote control gizmo you hold in your hand and watch as your

opponent's legs become a bloody mess. Press the secondary fire mode key while the mine's running and you get to see where the little bugger is headed. They're lots of fun at parties too, so I hear.

Hotkey: 6

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Explosion

Primary Fire Mode Damage: 70

Secondary Fire Mode Effect: Mine's eye view

Secondary Fire Mode Damage: n/a

Effective Range: Short to medium

Instant Hit/Lead: n/a

Ammo: Mines

Ammo per shot: 1

Max Ammo: 10

Rocket Launcher

No shooter would be complete without the quintessential Rocket Launcher. Sin's RL is not essentially different from any other 3D shooter out there, so it doesn't warrant much comment. The only two points of difference that I found is that the rockets are slower than most other games and leave a huge smoke trail, rendering them almost useless at long distances, and the splash damage is minimal with a confined area of effect, necessitating almost direct hits.

Hotkey: 7

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Rockets

Primary Fire Mode Damage: 90

Secondary Fire Mode Effect: n/a

Secondary Fire Mode Damage: n/a

Effective Range: Medium

Instant Hit/Lead: Lead

Ammo: CB-40 Shells

Ammo per shot: 1

Max Ammo: 100

Pulse Cannon

This weapon is Sin's answer to the HyperBlaster in Quake 2, except less effec-

SIN



PULSE CANNON



SNIPER RIFLE



SPEAR GUN

tive. In primary fire mode it lobs an energy pulse thingy that has about the same range as a grenade. The pulse explodes when it touches anything, and gives off a little splash damage. This weapon is only really effective in this mode if you score a direct hit, or need to lob a projectile over an obstruction. In secondary fire mode it fires a very funky looking lightning ray that fries anything in its path, sort of.

Hotkey: 8

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Energy Pulse

Primary Fire Mode Damage: 65

Secondary Fire Mode Effect: Lightning

Secondary Fire Mode Damage: 65 (for a complete cycle)

Effective Range: Medium

Instant Hit/Lead: Lead / Instant Hit for secondary fire mode

Ammo: Cells

Ammo per shot: 20 in primary fire mode / 5 per cycle in secondary fire mode

Max Ammo: 200

Quantum Destabiliser

Great name, doesn't do much. As the token most-powerful-energy-weapon in the game, the Quantum Destabiliser is all eye candy with little effect. This rather impressively large weapon fires a huge blast of what looks like a pillar of fire from biblical times at your foes, who may or may not be from Sodom. You can hold down the fire key to build up a charge that will inflict more damage when you release it but be careful - you can only load a maximum of 70 cells before the weapon explodes in your hands. Due to its rather poor time/damage ratio and minimal splash damage, the Rocket Launcher is probably more effective. However, you may be able to scare Christians off more easily with this one.

Hotkey: 9

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Quantum Blast

Primary Fire Mode

Damage: 90, but up to

150 if fully charged

Secondary Fire Mode

Effect: n/a

Secondary Fire Mode

Damage: n/a

Effective Range:

Medium

Instant Hit/Lead: Lead

Ammo: Cells

Ammo per shot: 20-70

depending on how long

you depress the fire key

Max Ammo: 200

Sniper rifle

Snipers and campers are going to have a field day with this one. Despite the weapon taking a while to load initially, this weapon packs a mighty punch - a shot to the chest or head of an unarmoured opponent is an instant kill, and a shot to anywhere else will leave them worse for wear. It's very quiet in operation thanks to the built-in silencer, and has a very precise trajectory with no smoke trail, so if you find a good hiding place you can pick people off until they get so angry with you they walk around to your PC and slap you. The alternative fire zoom mode is a great touch, with the mouse sensitivity substantially reduced to improve accuracy.

Hotkey: 0

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Precision bullet

Primary Fire Mode Damage: 110

Secondary Fire Mode Effect: Zoom in

Secondary Fire Mode Damage: n/a

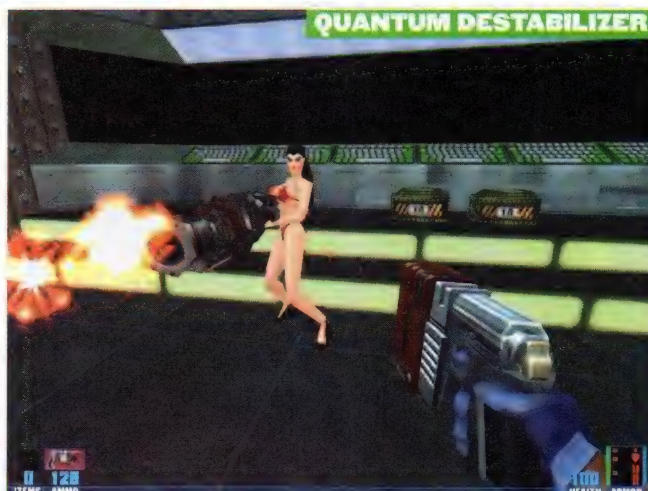
Effective Range: Medium or long

Instant Hit/Lead: Instant Hit

Ammo: Sniper Rifle Bullets

Ammo per shot: 1

Max Ammo: 20



QUANTUM DESTABILIZER

Speargun

This weapon appears in the single player water missions. Supposedly, Sin's munitions are true to life and do not work underwater, necessitating the use of the speargun. Personally, I had no trouble firing my weapons underwater so I rarely used this weapon. It fires a spear (naturally) rather slowly and does enough damage to kill most unarmoured humans in two shots. It also has no hotkey, so you'll need to use the next weapon key to find it.

Hotkey: n/a

Primary Fire Mode Effect: Spear

Primary Fire Mode Damage: 40

Secondary Fire Mode Effect: n/a

Secondary Fire Mode Damage: n/a

Effective Range: Short

Instant Hit/Lead: Lead

Ammo: Spears

Ammo per shot: 1

Max Ammo: 60

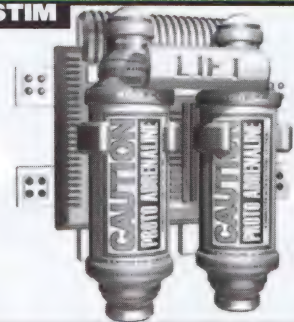
A-B STIM



BIO SHIELD



FB STIM



HELMET



JACKET



LIGHT ROD



M-STIM



PANTS



PHOTON



SCUBA GEAR



STIM



U4



Armour

Sin's armour system is also an improvement over other first-person shooters and something that should have been introduced ages ago. There are three different types of armour to cover the three main parts of the body - the Riot Helmet for the head, the Flak Jacket for the chest/abdomen and the Flak Pants for the nads and legs. Each piece of armour will protect you from 100 points of damage from any projectile weapon shot at that area. The Flak Pants will also absorb some falling damage. Your HUD will display your armour rating in the lower right hand side if you position your HUD at the bottom of the screen.

Powerups

Sin doesn't feature a huge array of powerups, and most of them we've seen before. Thusly, I won't bore you with the details, but here's a rundown of what's available in the single and multiplayer game.

V-Stim - 5% health boost

I-Stim - 20% health boost

M-Stim - 50% health boost

FB-Pack - 100% health boost

A-B-Stim - Temporary 200% health boosts. Any physical damage you incur with the A-B-Stim will still count.

U4 Vial/Injection - Like the Berserker powerup in Doom, this powerup doubles your speed and the amount of damage you do with your fists.

Biogenic Shields - Temporary invulnerability from projectile weapons. Note that your armour will still take damage, and this powerup does not protect you from explosions.

Photon Optic Displacement Device - Your basic invisibility. This powerup doesn't render you totally invisible, just very transparent.

ST Underwater Apparatus - Your basic SCUBA gear.

HC Light Rod - Small, green glowing rods. Poor man's flashlight.

Tactics

As it's based on the Quake 2 engine, players familiar with the dynamics of Quake 2 will

SIN



have a distinct advantage when playing Sin. However, Ritual have heavily modified most aspects of the Quake 2 engine, especially in terms of combat, so knowing the ins and outs of these changes will give you that edge you need to stay on top. Here we offer a synopsis of the main differences between Sin and previous 3D shooters you will need to take into account.

Location, location, location!

Location damage is probably the greatest enhancement to hit the 3D shooter since visible weapons. Location damage is quite simply dishing out more damage if you smack someone in the head, rather than in the foot. Unreal introduced location damage - shots to the head caused double damage. However, Sin takes it way further. The characters in Sin are broken down into many components - lower leg, upper leg, pelvis/abdomen, chest, lower arm, upper arm and head. In general, headshots do double the damage you would receive from a pelvis shot and a lower leg shot would be about half. Characters also react differently when shot in different areas - a shot in the arm will twist their torso whereas a shot in the leg may drop them to the floor. Characters also bleed wherever they get shot so you can use this to your advantage - if you see someone bleeding from the chest, chances are they have no Flak Vest and are already hurt there, so a couple more rounds should finish them off. Also, bear in mind that human characters in the single and multiplayer games wear armour like you do, so if you are low on, say, leg armour, try to aim for a foe's chest or head to leave their leg armour intact so you can pick it up.

Who do you think you are - Clint Eastwood?

One of the cool new combat additions Sin

has introduced to the 3D shooter is the ability to shoot weapons out of people's hands. Generally, you won't use this tactic intentionally - more than likely you'll be shooting a barrage of bullets at a foe and wonder why he drops his weapon and comes at you with fists. There are some good uses for this tactic though - the best one is if you have the Sniper Rifle and someone has managed to pick up a beefy weapon like the Rocket Launcher or Pulse Cannon, you zoom in on their hand and shoot their weapon out. Now you have two options - shoot them before they realise what's happening or if you're close enough you can run over and pick up their dropped weapon.

Charles' in the trees man!

Look out for snipers everywhere - they are usually on top of buildings or hills, and are quite accurate. You usually won't survive more than two hits by a sniper, so proceed into each area cautiously - especially outdoor areas. If a sniper is firing at you, the best thing to do is keep moving and don't run in a straight line. Try to find some cover and get behind it as quickly as possible. The only thing that will give away a sniper at a distance is the muzzle flash, so try and see where they are firing from. If you do spot their vantage point, don't bother using your Sniper Rifle against them as they will most certainly have a bead on you and beat you to the draw. Instead, fire some rockets or bursts from the Quantum Destabiliser in their general direction to try and flush them out. If you do manage to flush them, use an automatic weapon if they are at a medium distance, or a trusty shotgun to finish them off up close.

The shortasses will rule the world!

There are three models to choose from in the multiplayer game - Blade, Elexis and JC.

Blade is the largest model and actually represents the largest target, so you're better off playing as JC, the smallest character, in a deathmatch game. The different models do not have different attributes, either, so Elexis for example does not run any slower due to her, erm, dual thoracic hindrances.

Online Resources

There's not a lot of Sin related material floating around on the net as yet, but this may change with the release of the 1.01 patch that has fixed most of the bugs that made the game a rather painful experience.

www4.activision.com/games/sin -

Activision's Sin site. Doesn't have a huge deal of info on Sin that you don't already know, but contains some good reading and nice pics of Elexis.

www.ritual.com/sin - Ritual

Entertainment's Sin page. Contains much the same info as Activision's site.

www.ritnews.com - More a site devoted to news about Ritual than Sin per se, but has some good info and links to Sin related sites.

www.ritualistic.com - Yet another news site following the goings on at Ritual. These guys obviously have a following.

www.digitalsea.net/tweak3d/autoexec/sin/english - Excellent, web based autoexec.cfg creator for Sin. Now why hasn't anyone thought of this sooner?

Cheat codes

There comes a time in every gamer's life where no matter how good they are and how much they are in to the ethics of gaming, they must succumb to the urge to cheat. Whether it's because there's a foe they simply cannot defeat, or a secret area they simply cannot reach - mine is not to judge, mine is to provide. Just don't blame me if all your friends laugh at you for taking the easy way out.

god - god mode

wuss - All Weapons

superfuzz - God mode and unlimited ammo

wallflower - no target (Enemies don't see you)

noclip - no clipping (Walk through walls)

spawn xxx - replace xxx with what you want to spawn and walk forward to pick it up.

Some examples are:

rockets - Rockets

sniperrifle - Sniper Rifle

shotgun - Shotgun

shotgunclip - Shotgun Shells

flakpants - Armour

flakjacket - Armour

riothelm - Armour

coin - Quarters

can - Trash can

George Argy

TIPS & TACTICS

Little bits of help for the tough bits

CYBERSTRIKE 2 MULTIPLAYER

★ If you're playing the Shareware online version you only have access to a limited number of modules. The best configuration to have is delineated with this keyboard combination.

m e b
m e a
m e c
m d b
m d a
m d a
m b j
m b j
m x a
m x a

★ When fighting, always keep moving and always turret twist, either with rudder pedals or with a joystick that has a twistable stick.

QUEST FOR GLORY 5

★ Any character should go to the right of the screen once they've visited the Hall of Kings and talk to the lion Rakeesh, as he will give you either a grapple, ring of truth option, or a Katta pin.

★ Buy a pair of magic magnets from the magic shop when you start out.

★ Time limit for rites changes with difficulty settings.

★ Buy stamina pills and go to the adventurers guild to exercise, take pills and do more exercising.

★ If you run, strength increases faster, however if you walk, vitality increases faster.

★ Shadow punching and kicking will increase your stats, do this everyday before you sleep and before a meal.

★ Buy lots of magic pills and practice throwing spells around to increase spell strength. Use Boom, Protection, Zap to around 400 and Frostbite to more than 300.

★ Don't bother practicing swimming once you've learnt it.

FINAL FANTASY 7

★ At the train graveyard, when you encounter the enemy Ghost rider, steal from it! You will receive a staff which is only available after you leave Midgar!



★ If you've got the time & guts, try training for anybody's limit breaks at the train graveyard.

★ When fighting Reno, any allies pyramided in his attacks should be attacked by anyone else, to free them. If all 3 are hit by the condition, the party is dead.

★ In the cave, if anyone is dead, ramming into the spikes will bring them back to life, with one HP.

★ When Aerith dates you, screwing up on the stage act will result in Aerith slapping you, perform well and get a good laugh, but screwing up provides a better one.

HALF LIFE

★ Use your crowbar to break open every crate or box you see (except those labelled 'explosives'), they often contain health, HEV cells, or ammo.

★ Watch out for the tongue monsters, their tongues can be hard to see. Try and kill them all as the AI will try to back you up into them.

★ Save often (quicksave is F6 and quick-load is F7).

★ When faced with the alien-eaten scientists (those things that have the crab for a head and very sharp arms), just



run right up to their face and blast once with the shotgun. It takes a few seconds for them to fall but one shot will do it.

RESIDENT EVIL

★ Chris has only 6 slots to carry items and there's no way to drop an item. As you often need spare slots for puzzle pieces, be careful how much you carry.

★ There are several mansion keys around and are labelled as such when you pick them up. After you have unlocked all the doors corresponding to a key, discard it. It's an excellent opportunity to get rid of the item. At times, you should go around unlocking doors just to get rid of the keys.

★ Not all the zombies have to be killed, you can run away from them. In fact, if you seek to kill every monster, you will run out of ammunition real fast.

ORACLE

Gosh! Is there anything that he doesn't know? Truly astouundingly gifted, is our Oracle. He da man!

Once again, there has been too much violence, too much pain. You think you can finish the game without my help? Nice try, novice! Send in your gaming questions and I'll spare your lives. Just send them in and I will give you safe passage through the wasteland. Send them and you will find a cure to the misery and mystery that plagues you.



Write to the Oracle at:

ORACLE
PC POWERPLAY
78 RENWICK ST
REDFERN
NSW 2016
ORACLE@PCPOWERPLAY.NEXT.COM.AU

Half-Life

[?] O wise Oracle, I desperately need your help in the top game Half-Life. I have just entered Gonarch's lair and I am getting killed straight away and can't seem to defeat Gonarch. Can you help me please?

Russell Hope
Internet

[*] When you enter Gonarch's lair, wait for the beast to come galloping out of the cave. Aim for the sack dangling beneath its armoured shell and hit it hard. [BTW this works in real life too]. When the small insects attack you, use the Glock, the Hive Arm, or the Crowbar to get rid of them. Gonarch will go running off into the cave after you have done some damage. Don't follow yet. Pick up the ammo and HEV power lying around the dead Scientist. Now follow Gonarch into the second chamber. Continue fighting Gonarch until it breaks through the mesh into the next area. Kill the accumulating insects and keep following Gonarch. As you fall into the next chamber, try to land on the mesh before falling to the ground to avoid taking damage. Continue shooting Gonarch and eventually it will fall through the mesh onto the ground. Shoot until it's dead then fall down the hole her death rattle creates into the teleporter.

Half-Life Mk II

[?] I've just started Half-Life and have already hit a snag. I can't seem to get past the three headed tentacle thingy, where the scientist was ripped to shreds. Can you tell me how to get past it?

Roger Brimstone
Clovelly

[*] Remember what the Security Guard said; "It can hear us." This is your cue to use stealth mode. If you crouch, the Tentacle cannot hear you. Crouch, then walk slowly up to the door and wait about 20 seconds. Once the Tentacle can no longer hear you, it will stop flailing about and you can sneak right by it.

Tomb Raider 3

[?] Hi Oracle. I am having trouble in Tomb Raider 3 getting past a certain area. It's on the level Aldwych in London. I am up to the bit where I run down the escalator and jump over the subway tracks and I have picked up the old penny. Now I don't know where to go...

Mary Doyle
Sutherland NSW

[*] Drop down to the tracks that you jumped over, and sprint down the tracks to the opening on the right to avoid getting hit by the train. Enter the red room and dispose of the enemies, then make your way up the boxes and retrieve your save crystal.

Age Of Empire: Rise Of Rome

[?] I am really stuck on Scenario Four: Metaurus, in Age of Empire: Rise of Rome. My objective is to Destroy the two Carthaginian forces, or build a wonder that stands. I can't seem to defeat the forces so could you help me with a way to finish this campaign.

Dr Brian

[*] Expect attacks from three fronts: south, north, and west. You should group all your troops together and station them south because that is where the heaviest attacks occur in the beginning of this scenario. Start mining stone as soon as you can at the quarry in the southwest of your settlement. Lay down towers to the south, near your houses; to the north, near your barracks and archery range; and in the west, next to your granary. Then Get up a force of about half a dozen cavalry or chariots and keep them in the middle of your town to respond to any threats or incoming siege weapons. At this point, you should start building a wonder. If you need extra gold and stone, they exist to the east or west. Raise a storage pit at either location and bring along some archers and infantry for defense at your resource outpost. Build the wonder and the scenario is yours.

Need For Speed 3

[?] I have really got into the Hot Pursuit mode in the game Need for Speed 3. My only problem is that the police catch me really quickly and often. I know there are probably cheats but I don't want to use these. What are some good tactics in the Hot Pursuit mode.

Joseph Murray
Freemantle, WA

[*] Ah, you want to get rid of the bronze. OK here's a few tips from the master.





Stay ahead of the cops to avoid them pitching you into a wall. Be the aggressor and hit them first, before they hit you. If they hit you first, they may knock you off balance. If you have them on either side, try spiking the brakes quickly to drop behind one of them and the pass him on the other side. Be careful not to slow down too much, as they'll pull you over if you do. The other tip is to get very familiar with all the little short cuts and jumps on each track. Road blocks and spike belts can be avoided by utilizing these at the last minute. Also, cops don't take short cuts so you can gain some time by using these - but again, remember the short cuts must be taken fast, because slowing down below 50 mph may get you arrested.

Abes Exoddus

? Hey Oracle, can you help me pass through the Boneworkz in Abes Exoddus. I can't pass the stage with the big chase by these freaky dogs. I wonder if there's some way to be faster than these dogs. Please help

Shelly Preston
Internet

***** Learn to run. Go down, and start running back to where you passed the hole in the ceiling (the dogs will fall through). Now return and pull the stick to activate the electrical wall. The dogs will never again harm you.



Gangsters

? I need help with Gangsters. How can I go about setting up illegal businesses?

Johnny Goodfella
Internet

***** To set up an illegal business you have to do a few things.

- You must buy a business (one that fits what illegal business you want helps.) For example, buy a restaurant or something similar if you want a speakeasy.
 - Buy the empty land behind the business the next week. This land can be used to build the illegal business. This is cheap - you can usually get it for about 2-5 hundred dollars.
 - Build your business. Remember that the person that you send to build it will run it, so send someone with good business skills!
- Now have fun and don't get caught by the police

Star Wars: Rogue Squadron

? I'm stuck on Stage 6 of Rogue Squadron. How do I deactivate the shield on the Jade Moon so I can gather supplies?

Steve Younes
Internet

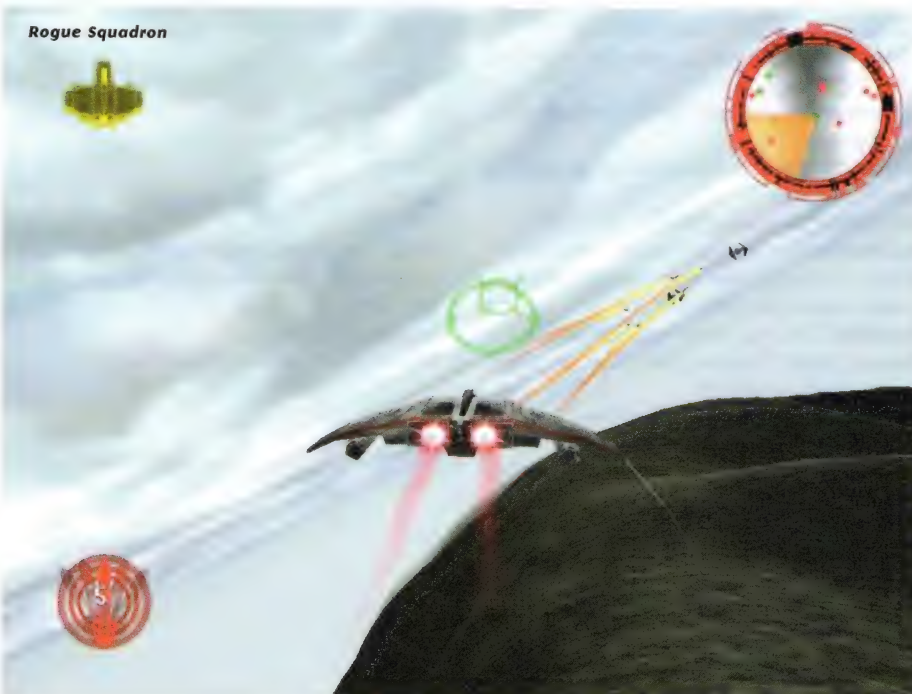
***** Destroy all the AT-PTs you can, since they'll annoy you later if you don't. Keep going forward and you'll find several Laser Turrets, destroy them all and clear out the area. Turn left to find a field of Missile Turrets, quickly destroy these before they kill everyone, including you! Using your radar, make your way through the canyon, and you'll soon find yourself at the Shield Generator! Defeat all the nasties there, then shoot everything you have at it (it's the long worm thing that looks like a bunch of gears connected together). When it's gone for good the shield will disappear, allowing General Madine to quickly go in and gather supplies, then leave. At this stage, you will be bombarded with Bombers and Tie Interceptors. Kill them all to continue to the next level.

Sanitarium

? How do I get inside the laboratory in Sanitarium? I've been in the study and taken the pipe key. Now how do I use it with the strange contraption which is blocking my path?

Samantha Smith
St Kilda, VIC

***** You are halfway there. What you need to do is power up the contraption by using the pipe key on the pipes on the upper right. The object of this puzzle is to open up all the clasps so the stone will drop into the hole. To do this, pull the lever on the right. Turn the wheel 4 times. Pull the lever. Turn the wheel 1 time. Pull the lever. Repeat (4 times, pull, 1 time, pull, 4 times, pull, etc) until the stone drops. **MAKE SURE YOU TURN THE WHEEL THE SAME DIRECTION EACH TIME.** Once done, the door to the lab will open.



CODE

Contrary to what you've heard, using cheats won't make you go blind. Probably

Caesar 3

Try this. Right click on the water well, type **ALT K**, followed by:
ALT V for instant victory.
ALT C for more cash if you have less than 5000Dn.

Carmageddon 2

Enter these during the game:
lemmingize - stupid peds
stiffspasms - timer counts up
tilty - pinball mode
wotatwatami - flamethrower (15)
smartbastard - finish race
tingting - free repairs
stopsnatch - timer toggle
moonningminnie - lunar gravity
cintonco - hot rod
fastbast - turbo peds
watersport - underwater ability
mrmainwaring - pedestrian panic
bigdangle - mutant tail thing
wetwet - credit bonus

101st Airborne

Just type these codes during gameplay:
AirNormandy: soldiers re-jump into Normandy.
AngryManDinners: soldiers are given food.
Iknow: displays all Germans, equipment bags, and insides of buildings.
TraitorTraitor: current soldier surrenders.
PrisonPod: removes all parachutes.
Weasel: all soldiers on the map are made available.
YouGoSquishNow: all the Germans on the map are killed.
Helllive: all the Germans on the map are killed.
Ihaveyounow: all the Germans on the map surrender.
Beef: all the cows on the map are killed.
Heknows: turns off Iknow.
Robocop3: makes your soldier go berzerk.
Hohoho: Gives your GI a brand new MG42 plus two ammo belts.

War of the Worlds

To activate a cheat code, you must be within a game and looking at the battle map or war map. Then, simply type in one of the following codes:



Star Wars Rogue Squadron



Powerslide

ICOMEBACK - Shows all research
ATC000 - Purge all Martians (BattleMap only)
PUNYHUMANS - Purge all Humans (BattleMap only)
YOULIKEIT - Boosts efficiency to 100%

Star Wars Rogue Squadron

The following are passcodes for Star Wars: Rogue Squadron. To enter the passcodes, simply click on Settings from the game's console, then click on General. Type in the passcodes into the blank area labelled "Enter Passcode Here". To delete a passcode, i.e. the Chicken Passcode (hate being a chicken?), simply click on the passcode, and press Shift-Del.
CREDITS Funky credits appear like at the end of a Star Wars movie.
LEIAWRKOUT Activates Force Feedback for PC Joysticks.
GUNDARK Modifies Force Feedback control for PC Joysticks
CHICKEN Play as an AT-ST!
DIRECTOR Let's you view all the cutscenes. Select "At the Movies" from the High Scores menu to view the cutscenes.
MAESTRO Let's you listen to all the sound themes. Select "Concert Hall" from the High Scores menu to activate.
IAMDOLLY Gives you unlimited lives.
TOUGHGUY Gives you all powerups in the game (i.e., advanced blasters, advanced seeker missiles, etc.).
NUMBERTWO Gives you infinite secondary weapons, which mostly consists of missiles or bombs.
HIKEN Hidden secondary weapons.
NEUC Unconfirmed. Destroys all Imperial ships on the radar.

Powerslide: Full Version

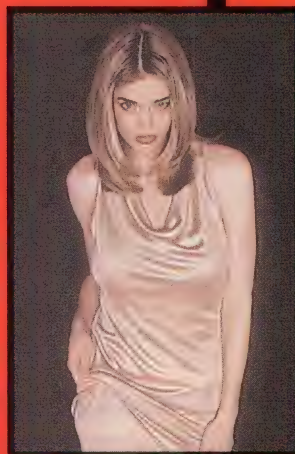
Type in cheats while you are playing, and an icon will appear in the top right of the screen.
APOLLO: Unknown.
BLAST: Repels other cars.
BOMB: Launches a bomb from your car onto the track.
BURN: Briefly ignites a spot near your car.
GLIDER: When in the air, car controls like a glider.
HOVER: Cars hover.
ICBM: Car acts like a missile.
JUMP: Each time, jumps car several feet in the air.
LAUNCH: Hit "a" to launch a car, "z" to move in the direction you're facing.
LIGHT: Lighter car.
LUNAR: Lunar gravity.
SLEEP: AI cars don't steer, they just accelerate.
SLIPPY: Slippery surfaces.
SPIDER: Car adheres to any surface.
STICKY: Stick surfaces.
SUCK: Cars gravitate towards each other.
TIMEWARP: Slows time for AI opponents.
TWISTER: AI cars get whipped around by an invisible tornado.
WARP: Other cars crawl over track.

MAX

**The Original Magazine
for Australian Men**

“You’re Only Male Once!”

On sale monthly



Dr Ashton's amazing tech-angst remedies

When you write, remember to include as much pertinent information as possible. Send your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT and any associated *.INI files for Windows that might tell me more about your problem. Give me as detailed an explanation as you can and be sure to include as much detail as possible about your PC. Feel free to email your questions or, if you want to snail mail, please remember to write clearly or better still, print your letters. Please note that due to the volume of messages we receive, we cannot guarantee a response to your queries.

Setup
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St
Redfern
NSW 2016
setup@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

Clocking it up

Q I recently upgraded my 3D to a Diamond Viper 550 card and am keen to overclock it to get the most out of it. But I can't find any overclocking tools available for it. For the Voodoo cards it's just a matter of setting some environment settings, is a TNT card the same? If so, what are the settings?

Fred
Internet

A I ran into the same dilemma when I purchased my Diamond Viper 550 - how to overclock? Well, Creative's TNT offering actually has a special tool that lets you set and save the memory and processor speeds on the card, but this only works with Creative drivers. For the rest of us we can use a rather cool display tool called PowerStrip. It's actually designed for all video cards and has a nifty section that lets you overclock your 3D hardware, be it a Voodoo1, Voodoo2, TNT and so on. This lets you overclock your TNT by just sliding to the values you want and clicking ok. The only problem is that if you want the settings to stick everytime you boot up, you'll need to register PowerStrip. You can find PowerStrip at <http://www.entechtaiwan.com/>.

It goes without saying that you should add some extra cooling to your TNT. They run hot naturally and overclocking will really raise the heat in your box. For me, I removed the fan from a standard PII fan and heatsink combo and just rubber-banded it to the board. Fits like a glove and does a very good job at blowing air over the Viper 550's heatsink. I've managed to overclock the memory from 110MHz to 125MHz and the

clock from 90MHz to 115MHz. Tests with programs like 3DMark 99 showed around a 15% increase in performance, which isn't bad considering it the cost of the fan.

And a warning for all over-clockers - it's summer, ambient room temps are generally much higher and you'll find that where your CPU and video cards have been stable for months while over-clocked, they might start crashing your machine. Underclock them a little over the summer period, it's better than frying them (unless, of course, you can force cold air into your box, but I'm yet to see the much dreamed of PC-in-a-fridge).

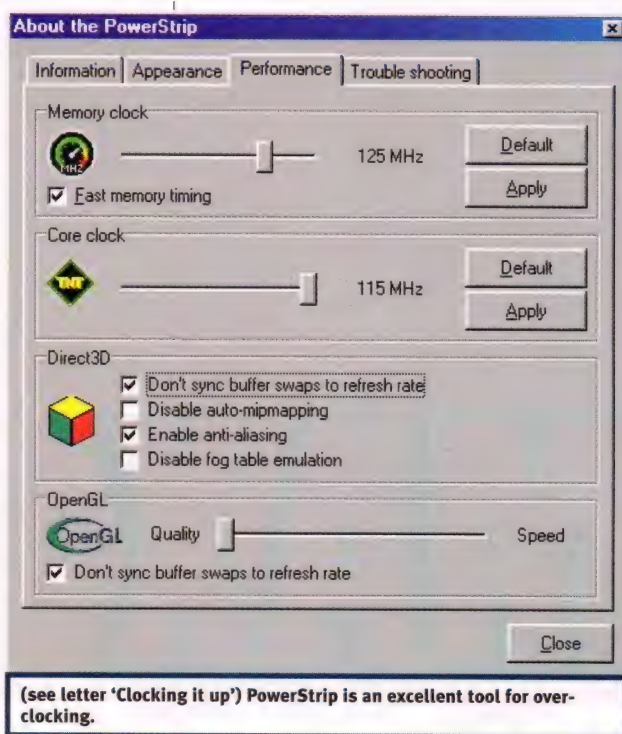
Back to DOS

Q I have a P2-233 running Windows OSR2 with 32 MB RAM. The problem I have is that when I boot up in DOS mode, himem.sys doesn't work properly. It is correctly installed, and when I type mem /c it says that it is installed. But even then no other programs get loaded into high memory. They are all using either the LH or Devicehigh parameters in the config.sys and autoexec.bat, but still don't use the extra memory. I have included my autoexec.bat and config.sys. Any help on the matter would be greatly appreciated.

Brett Newman
Internet

A Thanks for sending your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT. OK, firstly don't expect to load your mouse driver high like you're trying to do in your AUTOEXEC.BAT - it's big and it won't fit if you're loading other things high such as your CD-ROM drivers, which you're trying to do. Secondly, don't expect much to load high anyway - there's not a lot of space up there. Traditionally, you can force the size of upper memory allocated to drivers and TSRs, as well as the order they are loaded in (which sometimes helps) but all you're basically loading is your sound card driver, CD-ROM driver and mouse driver. They're not all going to fit, and that's the way it is. Seeing as you're probably trying to boot DOS to play a DOS game, there's also a chance it won't need to find your CD to play or for copy protection - so remove the CD-ROM drivers and you should free up enough upper memory to load your mouse driver high.

If you were really incredibly desperate to get everything loaded high, you probably could use third party memory management software - but why would you? There's not a lot of reason to boot DOS these days.



Choosing sound

Q I am looking at buying a new sound card, I have an SB32 at the moment and I thought of getting either a MX300 or a SB Live. At the moment it will mainly be used for Half-Life but obviously I would like it to support other games. I have heard that the MX300 supports or can play SB Live's EAX standard making the SB Live redundant, is that in any way true? My system is a P166 MMX with 32MB RAM if that makes a difference?

Robert
Internet

A The MX300 can indeed use Creative's EAX (Environmental Audio eXtensions) but that doesn't make the SB Live! redundant. Both cards have their advantages and disadvantages, and it all depends on what other features you're after. The MX300 is definitely a fine card because it allows you to choose between Aureal's A3D 2.0 or Creative's EAX, and so games that support either will sound beautiful on the MX300. However the MX300 is basically the A3D 2.0 chip with all the required connectors. Creative have been in the biz for a long time and they know what they're doing with sound cards, and the SB Live! really is an excellent card for high quality audio. All up, you can't go wrong with either card, it really comes down to price.

SCSI vs IDE, again

Q OK, I know this isn't a gaming PC type question, but I've heard so much about it and I want to find out why. I keep on hearing that SCSI is better than IDE, but SCSI is more expensive than IDE and from what I've seen today's IDE drives are going as fast as SCSI drives anyway, so why

So, in conclusion: SCSI is a superior design and sports greater efficiency, capabilities and features. But it costs. IDE is cheap, and for the most part it's quite adequate for most end-user systems.

would you buy them? I don't know why people keep on going on about SCSI, you even have to buy a controller for it whereas all motherboards today come with IDE controllers. If you can shed some light in this area it would be most appreciated.

**Trevor
Internet**

A Well, throw down the gauntlet why don't ya? I'm a SCSI user, and a happy one at that. OK, this is a BIG question with a BIG answer, but it's a good one. Why would you get SCSI over IDE? Actually, I don't recommend it for everyone. IDE is all about standards and price. In many ways, IDE is like Windows today - rather than re-write the standard and do a better job, just build upon it because it's already established and changing the standard now would mean changing how machines operate all over the world. Standards like Ultra DMA 33 and the new DMA 66 stick with the IDE interface and just improve how the drives and controller talk to each other (although the DMA 66 standard requires a special cable). All hard drives, minus the interface, are essentially the same. That's why hard drive manufacturers release IDE and SCSI versions of their drives - if the drive itself can transfer, say, 10MB a second, then that's what it'll transfer whether it's IDE or SCSI. The interface is all about efficiency and features. IDE is a CPU intensive interface and is, as you know, limited to four devices. SCSI uses hardly any CPU, sports nifty features like tagged queuing and up to 16 devices, and generally has a higher maximum bandwidth than IDE.

Now, SCSI chips are much more complex than IDE, and so both the interface and on-board circuitry is more expensive for SCSI. Hence the price difference. It's also why IDE is found on all motherboards these days - and why not, it's cheap. IDE has become the de facto standard because of its cost, and that will always win in a world where PCs are already expensive. SCSI is dropping though, and you will find many of the popular motherboards come with in-built SCSI as well, although the cost of the motherboard is normally upped a fair amount (but still much cheaper than buying a separate SCSI controller).

So, in conclusion: SCSI is a superior design and sports greater efficiency, capabilities and features. But it costs. IDE is cheap, and for the most part it's quite adequate for most end-user systems.

Which 3D?

Q I wish to know which video card is better for my computer. Viper550 AGP, Monster Fusion AGP or 2

Monster3D 2's in SLI mode. Money is no object when it comes to performance in games which will be its main purpose.

**Luke Hammond
Internet**

A OK, I've been getting a lot of mails on this topic, so here's the answer you've all been waiting for: THERE IS NO IDEAL 3D SOLUTION. Well, not yet anyway. If you go the Voodoo2 you're going with an industry standard that is supported in all games. It's also known for its speed and, if you SLI, you're getting the fastest 3D on the planet at resolutions up to 1024x768.

If you go the route of cards like the TNT, you get superior image quality (and until you see it, you don't realise how important this is), lightning speed in resolutions up to 1600x1200 and 2D speed fast enough to challenge Matrox's reign.

You could go the Banshee, 3DFX's 2D/3D offering similar to the TNT, but it's essentially just a Voodoo2 that can run at higher resolutions and comes with a 2D component as well. And what of cost? Are two Voodoo2's worth it? Is it just better to get a 2D/3D combo like the Banshee or TNT? And what about soon-to-be-here technologies like the Voodoo3 and ATI Rage128?

Here's your answer: Like any field in computing, it's always going to develop faster than you can keep up. There will never be an ideal 3D solution because the technology just keeps improving. What you want to do is ask yourself two questions: What can I afford?, and, is speed or image quality more important? Armed with these answers you then look for a card that satisfies both criteria.

Tech Tips

Tips and tricks to make using your PC a more pleasant and enjoyable experience. Really.

This month we have a Beast submission by Michael Van Boeckel in response to the specs I published of my own glorious gaming PC. Let us drool over Michael's setup as he shares with us his source of happiness.

The Beast:

- FIC PA-2012 Motherboard (1MB of L2 cache!) [I'm impressed - ed]
- Intel 200MMX Chip
- 64MB SDRAM (Huge when I bought it)
- 8MB Diamond Voodoo 2
- Legend ET 6100 2D card
- AWE 64 Soundcard
- Iomega Zip Drive
- Diamond Data (Mitsubishi) 24xCD
- 15" GTC Monitor (Superb and didn't cost the earth)
- Quantum Fireball 3.2GB HDD
- Quantum Fireball 10.2GB HDD (That's right, 13.4Gb of gaming goodness)
- Win 95 (not the space-sucking and slow Win 98)
- ATX Mid-Tower Case
- Web Excel 33.6 DFV Modem
- NE2000 Network Card
- Microsoft Sidewinder Pro Joystick (So stone me)

Cool Things:

- Software Shutdown
- Win 95 has only crashed once! [really? You lucky *&%#\$ - ed]

Things To Come:

- Upgrade to either AMD K6-3 or AMD K7 and motherboard to suit.
- 128MB PC100 SDRAM
- 56K modem
- DVD-RAM (Eventually)
- Decent set of speakers

And, a screenie of Michael's fave background pic:



Not bad Michael, not bad at all. Glad you're a Bab5 fan, that's very important. Remember folks, you too can gain stardom for yourself and your precious pal - especially if you've done some cool modifications to your baby, or its specs are just so incredibly awesome that they just have to be published for the world to see.

the changing face of

3Dfx

Oh, how the mighty are...falling. 3Dfx's entry onto the scene seemed too good to be true - and maybe it was. By Jere Lawrence.

It seemed only yesterday that 3Dfx were the local heroes. They came along as shining knights to usher in a new era of gaming. Now, however, 3Dfx are starting to show that profit is more important than their user base.

Take the Voodoo 3, for example. Speculation is running wild over 3Dfx's decision to retain the 16 bit palette. 3Dfx are stating that most current games just don't demand it. There have been claims, however, that with lacklustre acceptance of the Banshee, the Voodoo 3 has been designed purely for OEMs - essentially that the real money isn't with gamers, it's with Gateway and Dell.

3Dfx - The Big Brand

In fact, there's nothing even secretive about this. 3Dfx really are changing their focus from the retail to the OEM market, hence the STB deal. In what came as a shock to most, 3Dfx announced even after several manufacturers expressed their support of the Voodoo3 that they will not be given the option. 3Dfx will now be producing all future product themselves.

3Dfx have bought STB and will be breaking off from the other companies they're dealing with and using STB infrastructure to manufacture all products. In one fell swoop 3Dfx have instantly turned from being Diamond and Creative Lab's ally to their direct competitor. An interesting move as one has to ponder how they will be able to deal with the 2 giants as market rivals, and yet keep endorsing their past products.

nVidia, who are keeping their production policy open, could be rather concerned over all of this.

It's interesting just why 3Dfx bought STB, as STB were responsible for 50% of the OEM sales from nVidia. Still, nVidia's frown could yet be turned upside down. Quantum (of Obsidian product fame) have already announced they will be shifting their focus to the Riva TNT.

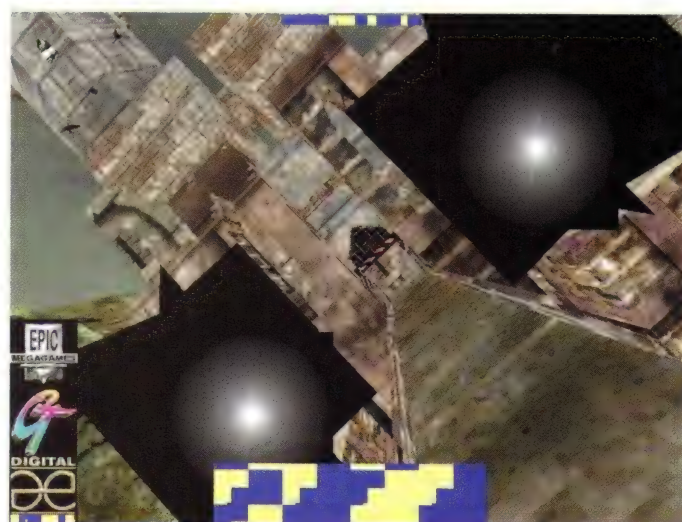
Also, Metabyte, the people responsible for the Wicked 3D (with the drivers that offer 20% faster speed improvements), have announced plans to develop support for their 3D stereoscopic glasses on the Riva TNT. Says Metabyte "we already have the TNT board, as well as others running with stereo vision and have the capability to port our other modifications to other chipsets as well". I'm sure we'll soon be seeing the Wicked TNT.

3Dfx - The Litigators

Perhaps the most insidious revelation to come concerning 3Dfx has been their treatment of a lone developer named Khalid Shaikh. A young, up and coming programmer, Khalid was fascinated by an achievement of a young Microsoft intern who managed to write an OpenGL wrapper in Direct 3D which demonstrated how DirectX was a faster rasterization API than OpenGL.

Armed with the idea of an emulating wrapper he decided to try and code one up that would emulate Glide through Direct3D. The premise isn't really that difficult; it's simply a matter of finding the function within the API and mapping it to the equivalent DirectX one.

According to Khalid, his reason for writing it wasn't to cause any kind of concern or trouble for 3Dfx but out of a respect for Glide itself. Glide in his opinion



was an excellent API that was a lot easier to program than Direct 3D or OpenGL. His ultimate motivation was in fact to assist the Unreal developers who at the time hadn't completed any form of Direct 3D support. Plus, this would also add more compatibility for the next gen cards (TNT, G200) and allow them to play the older Glide only titles.

Development went well and the wrapper worked successfully with an old 3Dfx demo called

Dolphins. The wrapper had this Glide app functioning perfectly through Direct 3D (even on a Matrox Mystique). Within weeks the wrapper had progressed to a level where Unreal could run in what was called "simulated mode". This didn't perform anything graphical, but did manage to intercept every form of Glide function call and log it to a file for analysis. Upon posting the results on his website Khalid received his first correspondence from 3Dfx.

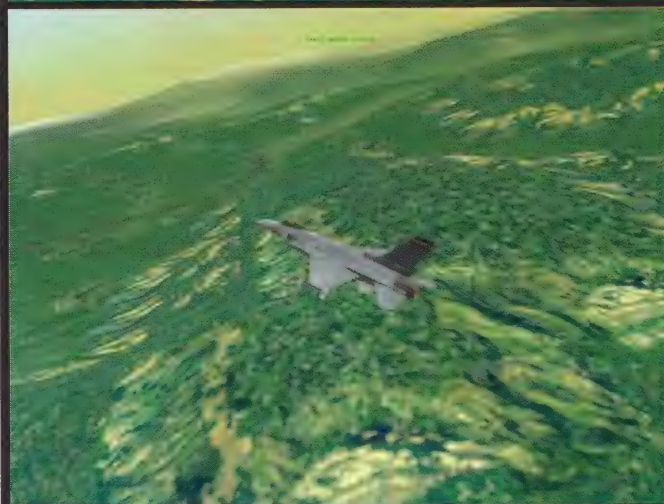
SPECULAR SPOTLIGHT

Falcon 4.0

After waiting as long as everyone has for Falcon 4, it just had to be this month's specular spotlight piece. Falcon 4 is a multiplayer air combat simulation set in the Korean peninsula with a real-time war in progress in which you take the role of a single pilot in an F-16 jet fighter.

This one is in the spotlight purely for the graphics - they're absolutely scrumptious. All ground scenery is photorealistic, texture-mapped and the F-16 is an extremely detailed model right down to the avionics, weapons and threats.

Being a Falcon product, we know it will play as well as it looks. Great work Microprose (took ya long enough)!



The note came from Bruce Busby, the resident 3Dfx legal representative. Khalid had inadvertently distributed a copyrighted 3Dfx Glide file (GLIDE.H) which comes from the Glide Software Developers Kit (SDK) in his wrapper zip file. He was informed to remove it immediately and a comment was also made that he shouldn't be developing anything for any other cards. With the mistake realised, the offending file was removed and development continued.

Another 3 weeks passed and the wrapper had reached the stage where Glide function calls were being rerouted to the corresponding DirectX function correctly. At this point, Unreal in Glide mode was operating in a limited RGB mode. Basically, each and every triangle was drawn without texture mapping, alpha blending, but with the correct Z Buffering, and with each vertex of each triangle having a 255 red (first vertex), 255 green (second vertex), and 255 blue (third vertex). The wrapper was progressing from a dream into a reality.

The dream ended however, and the nightmare began as 3Dfx brought out the legal heavy artillery with this letter. (Note: glide2x.zip refers to the wrapper).

Mr. Shaikh:

"We represent 3Dfx Interactive in its intellectual property matters. We have been copied on correspondence between you and Mr. Bruce Busby of 3Dfx."

The problem before us is the continued availability of the file "glide2x.zip" on your website: <http://www.angelic-coders.com/kshaikh>. This compressed archive contains the file "glide2x.dll" which was compiled from 3Dfx's copyrighted material. This use of 3Dfx's SDK and the

publishing of this file constitute violations of the license agreement.

Since you have continued to breach the license agreement despite warnings from Mr. Busby, you are no longer authorized to use the SDK for any purpose. You must return any materials related to the SDK, such as program listings or documentation, and you must destroy any electronic copies. Further, we require you to remove the infringing files from your website immediately. Finally, you must inform us in writing that you have complied with these steps and that you will cease and desist using the SDK for any purpose. Failure to do so will force us to take appropriate legal action, pursuing remedies available under both civil and criminal laws."

3Dfx vs D3D

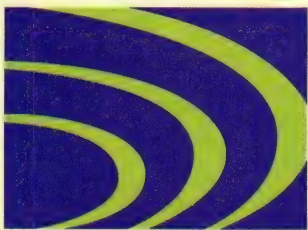
The most amusing aspect of all of this however was that at the time of download for Khalid and numerous other users, 3Dfx had failed to even place a license agreement pertaining to the SDK. There certainly wasn't an associated "I agree" button.

To many people, things became a lot clearer. Glide was a lot more than just a programmer friendly API, it was 3Dfx's ticket to more hardware sales. Moreso, with this reality in mind, it's worth contemplating 3Dfx's involvement with DirectX drivers.

Metabyte manage to increase DirectX speed through their 3Dfx driver by over 20%. Perhaps a little conspiratorial, but Glide has an acclaimed 30% speed increase over DirectX. Would 3Dfx "sabotage" Direct X drivers to muster further Glide support from developers (and subsequently sell more hardware)? Just speculation of course, but in light of 3Dfx's protection of Glide, a potentially valid one, perhaps.

The most sordid aspect of

Australian 3D viewing



Xenotech - Real 3D imaging brought to you by an Australian.

Dynamic Digital Depth (with offices in Western Australia) are engineering a new 3D viewing experience that will be initially used in arcade machines.

One of the most interesting aspects of the system is how it uses a proprietary infrared Eye-Tracking System that automatically "locks" onto the eyes of the viewer then uses ultra fast logic and signal processing circuitry to enable the servo motorized dual projects to maintain constant alignment with the viewer's eyes.

The technology delivers stereo 3D images to each player by tracking their head position precisely. The ETS built in to the console locates the player's eyes and tracks the movement of their heads while they play the game. Two images are then projected onto a retro reflective display screen allowing the players to view the game in 3D without any special glasses or headset. The result is true stereoscope, high resolution, flicker free 3D even in full ambient light without any degradation to image brightness or contrast.

ETS sounds suspiciously single-user but Xenotech are claiming that the Retro Reflective Screen Technology allows simultaneous multi, yet independent, viewing on the same large format screen.

Already a number of video game and motion simulator manufacturers have already shown great interest in licensing the technology and field trials are expected to begin with a major video game manufacturer in early December in the United States.



3Dfx's dealing with Khalid though was to take the problem to his employer, an unwarranted thing to do considering the wrapper was being developed solely on his own time. An employee of Microsoft (a developer in the Expedia group), Khalid received a phone call from the Microsoft legal department stating that 3Dfx had been in contact with them over the "matter".

With the fear of losing his job (and income), development of the wrapper has stopped and we can all rest easy in the knowledge that 3Dfx have saved us from the wretched evil that further 3D API compatibility would bring.

3Dfx vs The Rest Of Us

Most interesting, however has been the backlash that 3Dfx has received over their handling of this. Not just from the renegade flammers in Usenet, but from actual developers who sent Khalid their commiserations that his work had been stopped. Some developers have even stopped Glide support opting for Direct3D as a form of protest to 3Dfx's actions. There's also a team of underground hackers who wish to complete Khalid's work for no other reason but to annoy 3Dfx.

Sure, they might have made the best 3D accelerators but with the Riva TNT and the Matrox G200, 3Dfx shouldn't be being nearly so cocky. 3Dfx, thinking they are secure in their market share are suddenly seeing fit to step on everyone's toes even to the point of leaving us, the gamers, behind to cater for the



OEM market. This new attitude could be just the Achilles heel that other manufacturers have been looking for to bring this not so gentle giant down.

A3D 2.0 not quite there yet

Straight from Aureal's mouth are some comments concerning A3D 2.0. In this instance it was in regard to A3D and Half life. Currently there is a rather significant framerate hit acquired when A3D 2.0 is used. The most curious matter regarding this is that the temporary fix is to turn off geometry processing (what sucks up the host time). It's a rather strange comment considering that Aureal boasted its sound geometry processing would free up more processor for games. This is not to slight Aureal in any way, it's most

likely a temporary problem that will be addressed and fixed soon.

More info on the Permedia 3

One of the interesting functions the Permedia 3 has to offer will be in the form of virtual texture management. Currently all accelerator cards create the mipmap chain on a bind. Permedia 3 based cards however will change this with virtual texture management. With this it will only load the maps (or part of maps) as and when they are accessed by a pixel needing those texels.

For example, you could specify your texture as a 2Kx2K mip map with 12 maps (22Mb of texture at 32 bits) and if your polygon only textures from a small region of the top most map then the amount of



on-card texture memory you have used will be 4Kbytes (or 8Kbytes if two maps levels are actually used). It isn't exactly compression, more a matter of efficiency.

The Permedia 3 will also support virtual texture storage being in host memory (i.e. the 22Mb will need to be resident in locked down host memory) or on disk. Obviously if you have to fetch the texture off disk then there is going to be a big performance hit, but it does allow you to seamlessly integrate host disk, host memory and on-card memory into the classic hierarchy of trading size vs speed. Another less obvious benefit of Permedia 3's virtual texture mapping hardware is that on-card texture maps do not need to be contiguous in memory.

Without virtual texture hardware there might not be enough free space for the texture, but if it is not contiguous then the driver has to shuffle the already resident textures around to make room, making the bind call very expensive. An example of this would be the pauses that happen with 3Dfx cards occasionally - this won't happen with the Permedia 3.

Quick Bytes

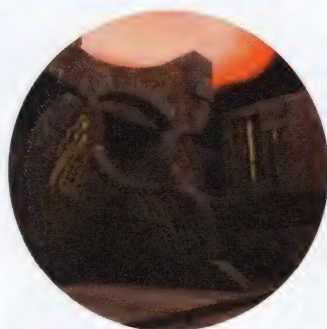
Super Savage 3D

Hercules have been busy over Christmas making a super-charged version of the Savage 3D. Basically, these are hand-selected Beast Savage3D cards, with special software allowing you to overclock the core from 100 to 130 MHz!

Quake 3 shots

These are some development shots of Quake 3 with the famed "curved surfaces". OK, I'll admit it, they look damn sexy.

Also on things Quake 3 here



Above: oooh, curvy! With Quake 3 Carmack gives the Gamers what they demand: bent bits!

are some id released benchmarks for the current work in progress. Don't panic yet, the framerates are low because there's still a lot of work to go on Q3. ID are expecting to increase the frame rate by 6 times by release.

CHIP FPS RENDERING METHOD

Riva TNT:

14.3 glArrayElement, 16bpp

Riva TNT:

14.2 glArrayElement, 32bpp

Savage3D:

13.4 glDrawElements, 16bpp/S3TC

Savage3D:

12.7 glDrawElements, 32bpp/S3TC

Voodoo2:

12.4 glDrawElements

Intel i740:

12.2 glDrawElements, 16bpp

Banshee:

8.6 glArrayElement

Notice how the Banshee clocks in the lowest, even slower than an i740. 3Dfx just can't seem to make a decent 2D/3D combo card. In this case, it's the distinct lack of single pass Multi texturing that brought it down.

Overclocking - Do it now!

Quick, go grab that Celeron 300a and crank it before it's too late (if you know what you're doing, of course)! RUN! With 99 ushered in we're faced with the sad reality that the sweet days of

overclocking are to end. The upcoming Intel chips Katmai and the socketed Celeron will not allow any form of overclocking at all. Sadly, even AMD are considering the same and plan to implement similar protection.

Oni

As 3D engines become more complex we're starting to see mixed genres enter games again. For all you oldies out there you'll realise that we're again seeing a re-emergence of variety through this (remember Karateka?). It's like the 80's all over again, bar the thin ties. So far...

Oni from Bungie software marks the first seamless unification of martial arts and gunplay into a new action hybrid they're calling, "full contact action." When your gun runs out of ammo, drop it and take out your opponents with flying kicks and neck-snapping throws. Other "niceties" include being able to knock an opponent's gun out of his hand, then grabbing it to finish off a roomful of nasties in a blaze of fire. If, on the other hand you're outnumbered, jump the railing to the floor below, kill the lights, prime a concussion grenade and dive outside through a plate glass window while the room explodes above you. Action fans will not be disappointed.

Oni will be a 3rd-person 3D action game and is being developed by the folks that brought you Myth: The Fallen Lords.

Drakan

With things medieval coming into vogue again a new 3D game called Drakan is in development. Described by those fortunate enough to have seen it as stunningly beautiful, the Drakan world is huge, intricately detailed, and laden with atmosphere. Lush environments include effects such as lava streams, waterfalls, massive spiralling mountains, floating islands, and much more. The game places you on the back of your loyal kindred souled dragon off to save the world from evil tyrant #116. The game will allow you to mount your steed and fight air to air with spells and, of course, fire. The engine is flexible enough, however, to allow you to land, dismount, explore and fight on land too.

Babylon 5 adventure

Confirmation has been made from Yosemite Entertainment's Public Relations department that development of an Unreal-based Babylon 5 adventure has begun. Their exact quote was "Yes, we are doing a so-called Babylon 5 sequel, an adventure game, and it will use Unreal." A talkative bunch, huh?

Net Game News

What shook your world last year, and what's going to shake it this year

We're a few months into the new year, but it's time to take a look back at what moved and shook last year in the world of online gaming. There's lots of promising online gaming developments doing the rumour rounds, but one thing's certain - while there's been a steady tide of sensationalism heaped onto the net gaming scene during the last few years, 1998 marked the year that multiplayer gaming hit the masses and finally became a tangible reality rather than just the next big thing.

Instead of being the future of gaming at the expense of the single player gaming experience, 1998 brought a new understanding of multiplayer gaming. In essence, people began to realise that while both types are quite separate to each other, both can also co-exist in near perfect harmony.

We had the announcement that the next big release from masters id software, Quake 3 Arena, would be a multiplayer affair only. We saw the release (finally) and continual development of Ultima Online, which while suffering from quite a few teething problems, managed to attract thousands upon thousands of players to its virtual shores. It con-



More Star Wars! Yes! Yes! Hurry up with the Prequels already, so we've got some fresh material to work with



tinues to expand and grow. A vast number of developers announced their takes on the online RPG, including the likes of Ever Quest, Middle Earth and The 4th Coming.

We saw the general improvement of online gaming providers, providing us with many, many glorious hours of multiplayer mayhem. And they became affordable too! We saw the future release schedules expand to accommodate a whole stack of new multiplayer (and even multiplayer only) titles.

And, more than ever, many people put the

NGN'S TOP 5 MULTIPLAYER GAMES OF 1998:

1. Quake II
2. Starcraft
3. Grand Prix Legends
4. Ultima Online
5. Diablo

In answer to the many questions on how we arrive at the Top 5 every month, we tally up the votes that YOU have sent in to us, as well as giving each of our contributors a quick call and getting their vote. That's it. It doesn't reflect HOW many people play each game, rather, what IS being most enjoyed by you the reader. The address again to vote, is ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au. Til next month.





The question is; will we see the skater's body take damage as they fail to clear the 8-flat-10 stairs in the distance?

multiplayer component of the more traditional single player favourites over the single player challenge. Quite a few single player games became, above all else, training grounds for multiplayer battles. Yep, 1998 was a good year, especially for those that liked to do it with others. 1999 promises to be even more exciting. It's the year where multiplayer gaming will come of age and begin the long process of maturing. It'll be the year where the types of multiplayer experiences on offer will explode, and where the choices within each genre will also expand.

Partly in celebration of all the great things that have happened (and that have yet to happen) to net gaming, but also because there's just too much notable stuff going on in the online gaming scene to cover in just two pages, Net Game News as of next issue is doubling in size to four glorious pages. That's where you come in. As NGN is about the people and events in the multiplayer gaming scene as well as the industry side of

HOTTEST TC/MOD OF THE MONTH

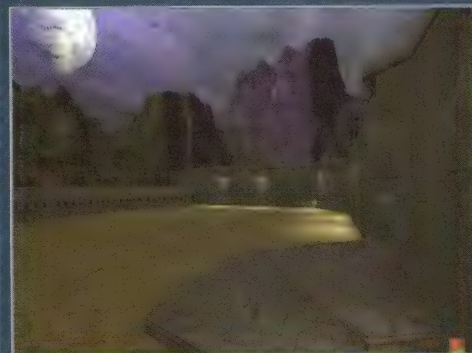
Doom II Mission 1

Developer/s: VerMoorD and Deslok

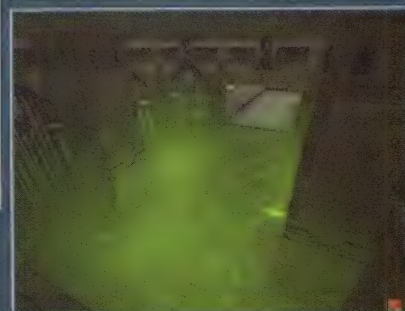
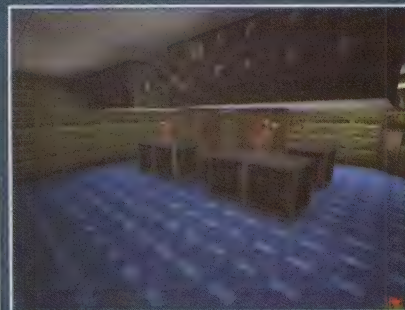
Game engine: Unreal

Available: Now

WWW: <http://www.unreal.net/vermoord/>



This month's hottest Mod/TC isn't in fact a Mod or total conversion at all. It's but a level, for Unreal. This is what happens when a couple of thirty-something level designers pour their hearts into doing gaming an immeasurable service - making what's old new again for a whole new generation of gamers to enjoy. In this case, VerMoorD and his pal Deslok recreated, using the Unreal engine, the very first level of Doom II, in its glorious entirety. The end result is truly spectacular. VerMoorD and Deslok, we worship you. Run, don't walk, to your nearest computer and go get this map NOW!



developments, we need you to send in your glorious MP experiences. Are you part of a gaming league that faithfully and frequently provides you with multiplayer ecstasy and you want others to know about it? Write in and let us know. Have you found a utility, total conversion or modification that you can't keep secret? Share it with the world in these pages. Send all related (and even trivial) bits of information to ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au.

Mod Central

Keeping to our 1998 flashback themed edition of NGN, it's time to take a look back at what the year did for us in the MOD/TC department.

The Fantastic Mod Central (<http://www.planetquake.com/modcentral/1998.htm>) Web site held two awards recently, the first being The Top Ten Quake II Mods of the Year (as decided by the people behind Mod Central and was exclusively Mods/TCs using the Quake II engine) and a reader's poll, spanning several categories (and not restricted to Quake II). Surprisingly, Action Quake II took out both top honours, with honourable mentions

going to Q2CTF and Best of the Rest. Action Quake II managed to win 5 of the 14 categories in the readers poll. NGN will be keeping a close eye out on what the A-Team get up to in the future - Like the upcoming 'Action Half-Life'.

For a great place to start all things Mod related (the how tos, the what ifs, the maybe ifs), visit <http://www.planetquake.com/modcentral>.

Mods To Watch Out For

Two of the more eye catching Mods currently in development are:

Usk8: Freeflow (<http://www.unreal-nation.com/usk8/>)

Star Wars Quake II (<http://swtc.telefragged.com/>).

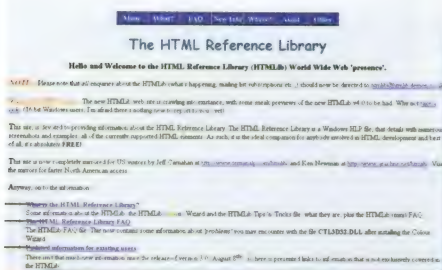
Usk8: Freeflow, as the title suggests, is a skateboarding game being developed using the Unreal game engine. Freeflow won't at all be a shooter, rather a skating sim/game. The idea is to hoon about on your board, and get points for tricks, as well as perfecting your boarding skill so that you don't retire early due to too many stacks. Level design and control has been modelled on real world physics, so that if it's a skating move in real life, it should appear in the game. The most interesting aspect of Usk8 is the multiplayer aspect, where tournaments will be held on freshly released maps, so that no competitor is at all familiar with course. We're keen to see how this one's going to be accepted by the online community.

Star Wars Quake II is the totally unofficial Star Wars Mod. The developers have provided a fantastic story and attempted to capture the Star Wars appeal and give it the robust Quake II treatment.



WEBSTALK

Spoony's attempt to justify the amount of time he spends online



HTML REFERENCE LIBRARY

<http://subnet.virtual-pc.com/~le387818/>

Let's face it, building a Web Site isn't that hard, but once in a while you're going to want to do something special, something that your limited HTML knowledge will not cater for. That's when something like the HTML Reference Library comes in handy. The HTML Reference library is actually a standard Windows help file that can be downloaded from this site or one of its many mirrors around the world. Even if you think you know every HTML tag there ever was, you'll still get good usage out of this site and its associated downloads. The library is easy to understand and uses examples as well as explains all the parameters for each tag. A must for all web developers.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★

DOODIE.COM

<http://www.doodie.com>

Tom Winkler used to be an animator for "the Simpsons" now he has this website to which he adds a new animation every day, most of which are hilariously funny. Beware though, this is toilet humour at its finest (or poorest). Whether you think it's disgusting or not, you'll most likely find most of the animations will have you rolling on the floor in hysterics; I like that in a Web Site. He's also kept all of his previous entries online so if you miss a few days you can

SO WHAT ARE ALL THESE ABBREVIATIONS AGAIN?

HTML - Hyper Text Markup Language. The text based language used to make websites.
CGI and Java Scripts - Special code which can be inserted into HTML to make Web Sites do special things. Most message boards use CGI scripts. Java can also be used for such things.

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions.

Mod - Modification, something a third party has added to an existing game, such as Capture the Flag etc.

always go back and see what more interesting things can be done with... well, you know.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★

MOD CENTRAL

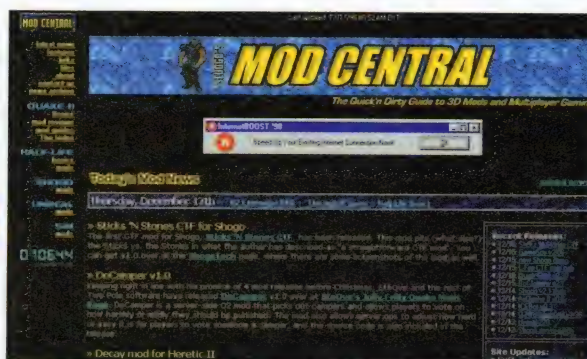
<http://www.planetquake.com/modcentral>

Looking for a Mod for a 3D action game? Look no further. Mod Central features Mods for all popular First Person games including the Quakes, Unreal, Shogo and Half-Life just to name a few. It's updated very regularly so you can be sure its a reliable source to get information as it happens, as well as post all the relevant links to downloads. Sometimes it can be hard to find a Mod you're looking for, and when you do it turns out to be rubbish. Mod Central review their Mods as well so you know what's hot and what should be left alone. Great site for people with a lot of time to download cool things.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★

Rod "Spoonman" Campbell



SITE OF THE MONTH

MATT'S SCRIPT ARCHIVE

<http://www.worldwidemart.com/scripts/>

This is another fine site for Web Site freebies. CGI and Java Scripts are a pain to make, and very confusing to novices just starting out. Luckily Matt's Script Archive has just about every script you could need for your website to make it the best looking and most functional site around. Everything is well set out so you'll find what you need in a very short time. Matt has also included a FAQ for each script as well as a demo to get even the rawest of newbies into the swing of scripting. A very well designed, informative and highly useful resource to make your site the best looking in your street.

Content: ★★★★★

Site Design: ★★★★★



Tom Winkler's

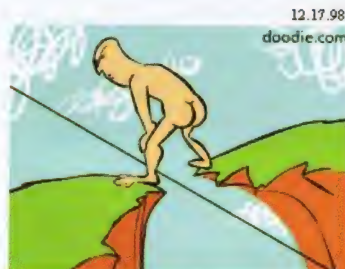
doodie.com

Every day

archives

FAQ

home



Wire Mire

Split Shit

new cartoon every weekday

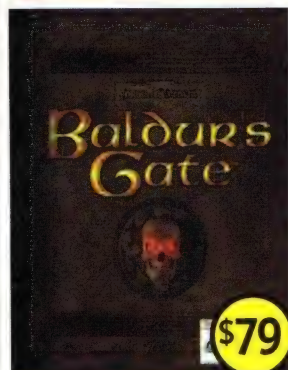
The Doodie T-Shirt
L, XL and XXL

Winkler Does
Infoseek/Spacecamp

Questions on
how to download

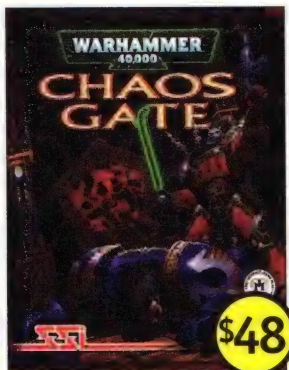
doodie.com

LATEST GAME SPECIALS



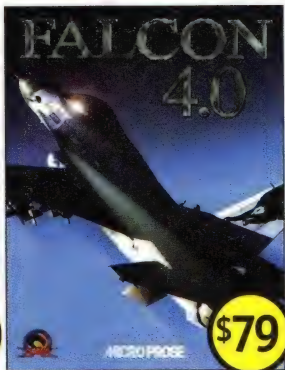
Baldur's Gate

\$79



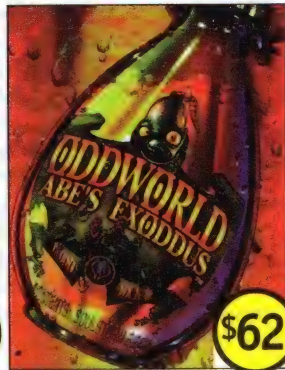
W/Hammer 40K

\$48



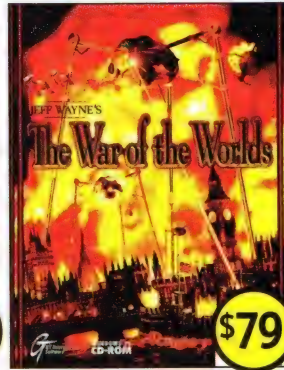
Falcon 4.0

\$79



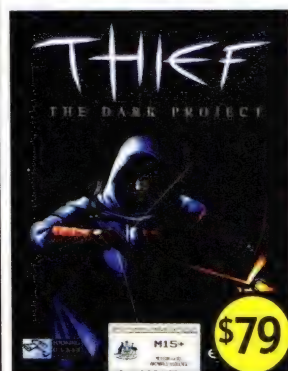
Oddworld Abe's Exoddus

\$62



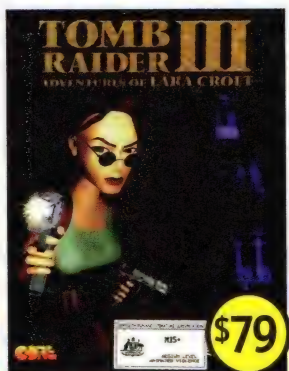
War of the Worlds

\$79



Thief

\$79



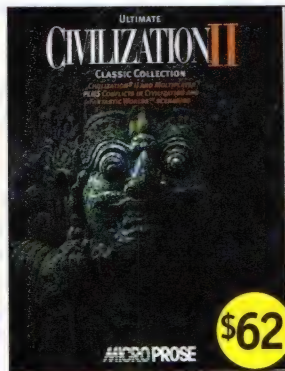
Tomb Raider III

\$79



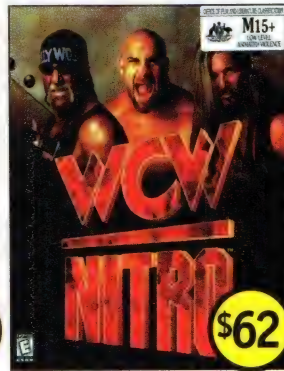
Turok II PC

\$79



Ultimate Civilization II

\$62



WCW Nitro

\$62

Other New Releases... John Saul's Blackstone Chronicles + Myst - \$48 • Settlers III - \$79 •

AFL 99 - \$62 • Railroad Tycoon II - \$79 • Caesar III - \$72 • Half Life - \$79 • Luftwaffe Commander - \$47
SimCity 3000 - \$79 • Myth II - \$72 • Powerslide - \$79 • Carmageddon II - \$79 • People's General - \$48

On Special... (Available while stocks last) Redline Racer - \$39 • Diablo + Official Guide - \$48 •

Atlantis - \$19 • Leisure Suit Larry Collection Vol 2. - \$59 • Monster Truck Madness 1 - \$28 •

FIFA 98 Road to World Cup - \$28 • X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter - \$39 • Third Millennium - \$29 •

NBA Live 98 - \$28 • Seven Kingdoms - \$19 • Lords of the Realm II - \$39 • NASCAR II - \$49 •

Capitalism Plus \$29 • X-Com Interceptor - \$48 • Pro Pinball Timeshock - \$39 • Mortal Kombat III - \$19

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LETTERS

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REDFERN, NSW 2016
letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

No, No, No

I am a very fond reader of PCPP and was APPALLED to see some dog poo in the park yesterday. More to the point though...

1. What are the reviewer's multi-player names?
2. If Powerslide is the best racing game ever, then why didn't it get the award and why did it get less than Grand Prix Legends? If this was an advertising scam (I saw the ads) then I am quite annoyed! (not that I will stop my subscription (I hate racing games anyway).
3. Do you reply personally to every letter asking questions?

Brendan Markey
Email

1. Living by the "only the paranoid survive" rule, we choose not to divulge our online nicks. Anonymity is the beauty of the net! I (Ben) always use my real name in GPL via VROC though... Come get some!

2. Separation of the powers
Brendan. Advertising and Editorial NEVER coexist, and all sorts of conflicts of interest occur. It's only when the printed mag hits our desks here in Editorial that we discover for the first time what ads are in. We be clean and honest. Trust us. Or we'll send the boys 'round.

3. Just not possible. With an average of 50-80 emails each day from readers... Bye bye PCPP if we answered the mails instead of making the mag. It's sometimes a real killer when we see how much effort has gone into some letters - but the best end up on this letters page, y'know, the page for letters (as opposed to bagging the opposition as a result of some pathetic infantile insecurity to compensate for an inherently inferior product).

The clone thing again

I am finding that games these days are just copies of older games, just done up with new graphics. You had Wolfenstein 3D, then Doom, after that Quake came out, then it was Duke Nukem 3D now it's Sin, all roughly the same game. Also games these days require a fast machine with all this 3D hardware stuff which for some is unaffordable. Do games these days have to have the realistic graphics? They make a game with super

graphics and the gameplay is just not there. You probably get letters like this all the time, but it's an issue which I find frustrating. You don't always need great graphics, I mean GP2 graphics are great and the gameplay and feel is excellent. These newer F1 games I think seem too arcadey and don't feel like they should. The companies are making newer things and developers are making games to suit these new upgrades but consumers can not keep up: Do we need all these new upgrades?

Gaming doesn't stand still for anyone, except in the case of new game ideas.

Glen Hall
Morphett Vale SA

3D Affects

3Dfx have recently acquired STB, a company that make 3D boards. This will give 3Dfx control over their board-making facilities which means that only STB will be producing Voodoo3 cards and above. Diamond and Creative (Orchid was acquired by Diamond earlier this year) are understandably pissed off. This means that there will no longer be competition between manufacturers of Voodoo2 boards. I doubt many people would have SLI V2 if there hadn't been this competition. The only competition left for the V3 is the Riva TNT and the Permedia3 (not released). STB make the Velocity 4400 TNT card and STB supply NVidia with 40% of their revenue. STB will no longer make this card and NVidia's revenue will go down. On top of that 3Dfx's lawsuit is looking worse and worse all the time for NVidia. No one will buy NVidia stock because they have a lawsuit pending. If NVidia do not ally with Creative and/or Diamond, then 3Dfx have effectively screwed NVidia and if they go bankrupt then 3Dfx will have a monopoly over the 3D accelerator market.

3Dfx were definitely not thinking of their customers when they made this move because it in no way advantages the consumers by offering cheaper prices, in fact it will do the opposite. This could indirectly affect game companies and gamers. If the price of cards go up then there will be less people buying cards and since they don't buy that card they won't be able to play



JOLT COLA LETTER OF THE MONTH
A CASE OF THE GOOD STUFF FOR THE LETTER
THAT SAYS IT BEST

Odd, I see...

It seems that Cam Elkins (from Letters column-issue 32) and Lorne Lanning (creator of Oddworld) are shouting from the same moral high ground. I read an interview with Lorne at oddworld.com and it seems that he (like Cam) aren't happy enough to simply have fun with games. Lorne has created a Star Wars-like saga with Oddworld that we have only seen the start of, but instead of being satisfied by achieving something that many of us can only dream of, he also wants to change (read: save) the world. At first (when I was a young lad) I actually mistook this kind of venture as being noble, but sadly it only comes off now as being self-righteous and pretentious. The truth is you can't change the world in any real way unless you are in politics. (Which I assume neither Cam nor Lorne are).

Sound pessimistic? Not really, that's just the 'system' we are in. Need some proof of this? Here is what I consider to be the closest anyone has come to changing the world outside the political arena: Using the most powerful medium (television) to spread some very socially profound messages but cleverly disguised as a cartoon for popular consumption we end up with The Simpsons. As much as I am a huge fan I must say that for all of its phenomenal success and its merchandising omnipresence, not to mention all of its socially (and sometimes political-ly) stirring commentary, The Simpsons haven't changed the world at all. A sad fact, but true. So to listen to the guru New Age bullshit that people like Cam and Lorne go on with like they are trying to save us along with the rest of the world seems nothing more than condescending. Which insults me. (Re-read Cam's letter).

I hope (as you said in your Editorial) that the heavy handed messages stay under the surface, if nothing more for the sake of the enjoyment of Oddworld (which I absolutely love playing). If the makers of Oddworld break that boundary it will very quickly lose its charm. If they keep within that boundary Oddworld could very well become a lovely alternative to the Star Wars universe.

By the way: Lorne didn't design Abe. An artist called Steve Olds did, but he not only designed Abe but ALL of the characters for the entire Oddworld Quintology. You can even see his signature at the bottom of the sketches in the Making of Oddworld. And do you know what sucks hard? Steve Olds hasn't seen any reward back from it and it doesn't look like he is going to either. The bastards didn't even mention his name in the credits of Abe's Exoddus. That's some moral high ground for ya!

Mat Brady
Brisbane

Mat 'smokin' gun' Brady strikes again. Will you please cease with the eloquent and pertinent letters so we can share the Letter of the Month around a bit?! :}

that new game that's just been released. If that game doesn't sell enough copies than the developers will lose money, and will have to make their next game on a tighter budget. This results in a crappy game and eventually the game companies will go down the plug hole. The only games that will be good will be ones sponsored by 3Dfx (eg. 3Dfx-only titles that require a 3Dfx card) We will expect to pay a higher price for these games and 3Dfx will then monopolise the game market as well.

Anonymous

Good call, and pretty much right on

the money. Our say on this subject starts on page 134.

Ditto

I think the main problem about RTS these days is that it originated from a single person, his company said cool, he said cool, the game was made. The other company said what a great idea, made a game. The first company said 'Our other game was such a success, let's make another! Another game developer said 'Hey, let's make another Real-Time-Strategy and make a ton of money.' All the com-

panies made lots of money, but it evolved from copying, so the game developers still copy from each other and you get a game that's like old days, then another and another. Then a great person thinks 'I'm bored, let's make a new one that's in the future', and the other game developers follow. Now we just get same, same, same, same, same.

I'm bored. PLEASE bring a NEW type of game to the market, game developers!

Thomas McKenzie.
Email

Duke's Butt

My God, it's true isn't it? Women will never be happy - it's always the injustices that are inflicted upon them in society, it's always the ill-conceived views and prejudices against women isn't it? Well, in most cases, this is true. Yes, equal rights in employment has always been an issue for women, especially in the area of income and job opportunities. But in relation to the Freedom Fighter in issue 32, I doubt anything has infuriated me more. Please, for everyone's sake, let's take a moment to think that not everyone is against the female gender, that game companies don't just want to portray women as objects that are useful as floatable devices in swimming pools. That's right, for a moment, let's look at ill-conceived views of men that are placed upon us by society and games companies.

Let's ponder Duke Nukem, the macho-git of which represents all men, I'm sure. The marines used in Quake 1 and 2, every 3D or 2D fighting game imaginable that has a male character. (The Mortal Kombat series is a fine example of a false physique). All these characters that in any case could represent around 5 per cent of the male population on the planet that we



all know as Earth, of which this 5 per cent will die from liver collapse or other fatal deaths due to steroid abuse.

Physiques portrayed in games by these simply can not be attained by the common wannabe exercise freak male. Now, let us weigh this against such falsely built female characters as Lara Croft, Elexis Sinclair and every female character ever used in a 2D or 3D fighting game. (Once, again Mortal Kombat is a fine example, as is Killer Instinct, Tekken or Street Fighter). It could almost be called equal couldn't it? It could almost be fair to say that for once some equality between genders has formed thanks to gaming, and yet, still uses misconceptions of what humans really look like. All these characters are what both genders see as the representation of ourselves, of which is very distant from reality. I realise your point was that Lara is the wrong role-model for females, and that games are directed at the male market. But be grateful that she was such a success, and while it takes sex to realise that there is a female gender, maybe Lara will spawn even more of the plastic females that males have had to put up with ever since the very first steroid freak marine graced monitors across the world, spawning even more of these male mon-keys. Then maybe females will become the dominant force for computer games? No matter how hard we try to escape a stereotype, we will never see a hero or heroine that does the job with a beer gut, a suit-case, or a wheel-chair. Who knows, maybe I'm sexist, but hell, I'm only 16, I'm not old enough to be fully aware of the inner-workings of society. At least, that's my excuse.

M W Rufus
Email

What we play

I have read your magazine from the starting issue and have every issue. One of the small little things that me and myself enjoyed was in your editorial, in the column next to



it right down the bottom, was a small little section hiding very discreetly. It was "What we're playing", I was horrified to see in the last issue (Dec 1998), it had been taken out. I was just wondering if this was permanent, or a change for a issue. I enjoyed reading this section (due to the fact I do not get out much), to see if people out there are really still playing great games like Quake etc. etc. I personally enjoyed this little "tid bit" of information and insight into the people I mean gods at PC PowerPlay, and I hope that this is not permanent.

Robert Lugton
Email

Our little subliminal is here to stay. We just went mad one month, that's all, no big deal.

Horse's Ass!

Shall we all direct our attention, back one issue, to the Riding Star review on page 110 or, more specifically, the right-most screenshot of the game. Now, do you notice anything, even slightly, dubious about the positioning of the hand-shaped mouse pointer; I believe I'd prefer not to know what you were thinking about while taking that screenshot, and I cringe to think of what you may have made of the box's "care for him, ride him, love him" remark. Eucch!

Hi-BeaM
Email

If you're a demented reprobate, like we all are, you'd be thrilled at how much fun there is to be had by putting the mouse hand in funny spots! The Pill Lady's late and Flipper the Goldfish isn't singing anymore! I'm tired and want to go home now...

Anyone home?

Please give me a short explanation of why you haven't reviewed Tiberian Sun yet?

Matthew
Email

Because it's a computer game silly, and this is a Horse Mag. Oh, and because it's still deep in development and probably won't be released for ages...

What a berk!

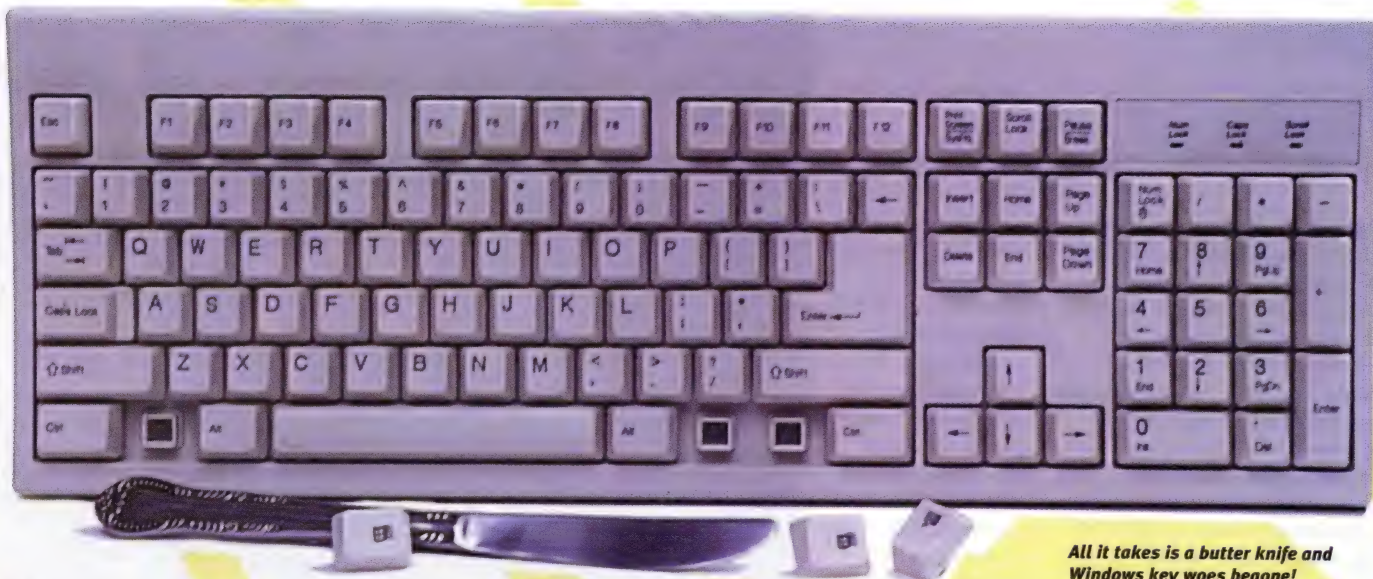
I thought of a game where you take the role of a famous television personality and walk around a place to do with the show they're on, as well as taking on baddies to do with the show. You could be Burke off Burke's Backyard and walk around a garden using a weed killer gun to take out giant killer flowers, snails and slugs. I hope you consider my idea.

Mr X
Gymea, NSW
Pill Lady!!!!

Ads? I love 'em!

Why do online game companies charge money for games when they could make just as much money from advertising!? I would MUCH prefer to have to watch a few ads every now and again than pay to play a game! The company Bezerk who made You Don't Know Jack and other cool free games just have ads and I love those games! (www.bezerk.com for the free games) A game called Sanctum from www.digitaladdiction.com has a card game where you have to BUY the cards! That's just stupid! I would never pay a game like that! I hope other readers agree and I hope other companies realise this and change their ways.

Markey
Email



PC lover

Why the hell do Mac lovers even exist? How could someone ever love a machine? Most of the people in the world use PC's, so why do Mac lovers insist on being, different! Can't they just be like everyone else and conform? Do they think they are better than the rest of us? They piss me off! I have a new IBM, equipped with a 450Mhz Pentium 2 chip and MMX technology, the salesman told me it's the best there is—and this goddamn Mac lover I work with tells me that his new G3 Mac tower is faster than my wonderful new IBM! Can you believe the nerve of some idiots? Even if his "computer" were able to outperform my PC, I'd like to see it run Windows 98 and the other 95% of the software market which is IBM compatible ONLY! He tells me it can! What's he been smokin'? He says he has both platforms running side by side on his desktop, (where does he get his drugs I'd sure like to know!!) And get this... he prefers to use the Mac OS rather than Windows... how stupid can one be? I asked him why; I got him then, he didn't really have an answer, he just spouted some gibberish about reliability and innovation—I didn't even listen to him. It's people like him who make me sick.

Joshua Burgess

Whoa there dude! It doesn't matter! It doesn't affect you! It's irrelevant! Pretend they don't exist! Pill Lady will be around soon.

Nothing's perfect

In your reviews in which games like Total Annihilation and Half-Life get an incredible score of 98%, you guys don't give a reason why these games don't get 100. I know it would have to be a damned good game to get 100, a

perfect score wouldn't happen easily, but you never give a serious reason why they aren't perfect in the box marked against. I mean, no game will ever be perfect, it just won't happen. It would have to be ultra realistic and look incredible while going in a totally new direction or improving on a genre so much anything compared to it would be nothing but a clone. A game like Half-Life is as close as it comes according to your reviews. So why only 98? I know it's not perfect, but why? Are you guys worried about criticism if you give a game too much praise or you just can't find any faults big enough to warrant talking about but are worth 2% or so.

Harley McGann
Email

We're just about the only game mag in the world that goes as high as 98% for a score. And I don't know why that's so... We just knew that these games were 98%ers. Caving in to convention and handing out a safe 95% is no reflection on just how blown away we were/are by these games. As for the magic 100%, we gave You Don't Know Jack 10/10 (our original scoring system) in issue 1 and stand by it. Who knows what the future holds, eh?

See Error

This letter is mainly in regards to the letter 'Install Nazis' from issue 32, I too have been hit by Sierra's supposed 'helpful' utility, I was trying out the new Caesar III, and installed it to a directory D:\SIERRA\CAESAR3, everything was fine. After playing the game for a bit, I decided to uninstall it to save disk space. I thought 'oh gee, I'll use that useful thing that Sierra gave with the game to uninstall it' and with that I uninstalled the game plus the utilities, I restarted the

computer like it said.

There was one small problem, I had a collection of Sierra's old games in that directory too, which I later found, that the utilities program had just simply deleted, I was rightly pissed off, many of the games I had, either the original disks had disintegrated or were on old 5 1/4" disks, which I don't have a drive for anymore.

Here's a list of the games I lost:

Leisure Suit Larry 1, 2 & 3, Police Quest 1, 2 & 3, Gold Rush, Space Quest 1, 2, 3 & 4, Jones in the Fast Lane, Betrayal at Krondor, Quest for Glory 1, 2 & 4, Gabriel Knight - Sins of the Fathers, Caesar I, Red Baron, Aro Tank Killer.

As you can see I should be very pissed off, fortunately the last five games are on CD and can be restored, but I've lost all my save games.

Over the last 10 years, Sierra has been one of my favourite game developers. As of late though they seem to be taking shortcuts on things like install/uninstall programs. It is this that has marred my respect for them.

Leroy
Email

101 Damnations

A little tirade to Keyboard Hardware Manufacturers everywhere. Is ANYBODY else in the gaming industry as annoyed as me about those three little things that are probably right under your fingers right now? I refer in particular to the Windows Keys. WHY?!? OK so the Mac had a key and the Amiga. Great idea says MS, we'll make a keyboard and put it in. (Marketing ploy? Any thought involved? Probably not.) Everybody else in the whole damned hardware industry says: Yeah OK. We'll do that too. (Why? We live in a feature rich world.

All it takes is a butter knife and Windows key woes begone!
(see letter 101 damnations)

Don't want to fall behind on the features do we?) We, the gamer, think yeah whatever. Get a keyboard with the new PC we buy a year later. Hmmm. The standard Doom keys are now completely unusable. Hmmm. I just wrecked my entire LAN Doom game because I bumped the key that is now in my way. I really do hate these keys. OK. Glad I still have the old trusty Honeywell 101. Next time I buy a PC: "Can I get a 101 keyboard without stupid keys please?" "Sorry they aren't made any more." "What?" Sigh grumble idiot salesman grumble. After some hunting. Sigh they really aren't. Tirade over. Back to Half Life on old trusty 101 Honeywell. (God save it!).

Murray McDonald
Email

ARRRRRGGGHHH!

If I have one more little snotty nosed brat come into my store and tell how he copied the latest games off his mate or downloads them off the net I'm going to kill him.

I work in a computer store and I would get at least half-a-dozen customers like this a day. They come in, check out the packaging and then go and copy it off a mate. Have some respect people, play the demo. If you don't like it then don't buy the game, that's what they are there for.

We even get customers with enough balls (stupidity?), who purchase a game together with three or four blank CD's and then ask "If I don't like it can I return it?". These people think that they are "Elite" or some kind of "Legend". WRONG! YOU ARE LAME, SAD, AND OBVIOUSLY CHEAP!

An Angry Shop Keeper
(Name withheld by request)

And we agree with you 100%.

COMPETITIONS

SOUTH PARK

The world's most lovable little bastards have become a rich source for the merchandising bandwagon. Big surprise there... Anyhows, we all love the 'Park' and this here comp. Has all the goodies you know you need. A bunch of special and fine companies provided these prizes, big thanks! The prize pack includes:

Videos from Warner Vision:

Volume 4 (Pinkeye & Tom's Rhinoplasty)

Volume 5 (Starvin' Marvin & Mecha -Streisand)

Volume 6 (Mr. Hankey, The Christmas Poo & Damien)

From Sony Music Entertainment:

SouthPark CD (Chef Aid)

From Acclaim:

A copy of the South Park game!

And the best news, - there're FIVE SETS TO BE WON! Ho ho ho. Each is worth over \$200, tops huh?

Because it's a great comp, and because we're complete bastards, we're going to make you work a little for this one, so:

Q. Create a new South Park character. A pic is optional. The description that makes us laugh the most wins. Don't forget that 'PC' doesn't stand for 'Politically Correct'...



WHERE TO SEND

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope. All entries close March 13, 1998. Entries to:
PC PowerPlay,
78 Renwick St
Redfern NSW 2016

Issue # 32 winners

HERCULES TERMINATOR S3 SAVAGE

Q: How many labours did Hercules have?

A. 12

M. Cohen, East Lindfield NSW

POWERSLIDE

Q. Who is Damon Hill's father and what is his claim to fame?

A. Graham Hill, twice Formula 1 World Champion (1962 and 1968).

D Ficarra, Chatswood NSW
D Hinks, Corindi Beach NSW
N George, Newnham TAS
B Hoch, Emu Plains QLD
J Thompson, Ninderry QLD
L Parse, Hazlebrook NSW

NOVALOGIC F-16 & MiG-29

Q. What is the common term for the F-16's 100% digital flight control system?

A. 'Fly By Wire'.

C Tilley, Gordon NSW
I Davey, Nerang QLD
M Bussing, Concord West NSW
B Fullick, Sheoak Log, SA

BALDUR'S GATE

Bloody hell! I know our competitions are a bit tough, but it seems we pushed the limit just a bit, for in PCPP #32 we ran a Baldur's Gate competition and got not one single correct answer! Hm... OK, let's do it all over again, then. Same deal - win one of 10 copies of Interplay's brilliant Baldur's Gate, but we've recalibrated the question just a bit so we KNOW we'll get at least 10 winners!

Q. Invent a new and punchy war slogan. Like "loose lips sink ships", but with a contemporary, nuclear theme. Doesn't have to be anti-war either! Just impress us with your wit...



AFL99

Gather 'round, sports fans, for this one's just for you.

Electronic Arts and PC PowerPlay have pooled their mighty power, and have dragged some of Australia's leading AFL players from a sunny trot around the paddock to a dank and smelly room where we made them sign copies of EA's new AFL 99 game. Just for you!

Yes indeed, be a winner in this comp and you'll have yourself a game box that's got 'heirloom' written all over it. Actually it's probably something really lame like "All the best", but we take what we can get...

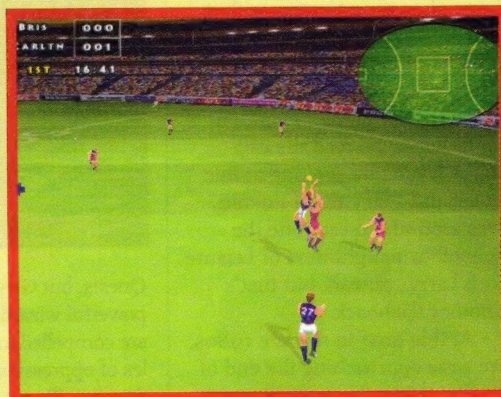
We'll be drawing one winner for each state. Naturally, not all states are AFLified, so for NT, ACT and TAS winners you'll just have to settle for whatever autograph you end up with. As for the autographed boxes, we've confirmed the following:

VIC Robert Harvey

NSW Paul Kelly

As for the rest, God only knows who we end up getting, let's hope, eh?!

Q. Give us your perfect 'AFL 'Dream Team' for the 1999 season. Our resident AFL freak Steve Watson will judge (feel comfy about this fans, Steve LIVES AND BREATHES the game and belongs to clubs and stuff).



KING'S QUEST III

To Heir is Human

Developer: Sierra

Year: 1988

Requirements: 286, MS-DOS, 256K RAM, CGA, 3.5" or 5.25" floppy disk

Recommended: EGA, Hard drive

A decade ago, there was only one company that ruled the software roost: Sierra. It was a fairy tale, wasn't it? Ken and Roberta Williams wrote their first game from their kitchen table and lo! they grew into a mighty software company of the 80s. They even named their company after some mountains they liked. They rode to huge popularity, principally on the back of the King's Quest (and various other quest) series.

Quest of Quests

My first experience of the King's Quest series was playing the original, when I wasn't even in double figures yet. Being such a little tacker, I didn't have a hope of coming to grips with it. But, by the time King's Quest III arrived on the scene, I was pretty much the target audience of these games. I was so smitten with Sierra, I'd read the catalogue feverishly, looking at this quest and that - and if no-one was around, I'd examine the schoolboy naughtiness of Leisure Suit Larry...phwar!, but that's another flashback.

At this time in the late 1980s, we were approaching the end of an era: It was the twilight years of the text-graphics adventure. Speech and actions were typed, taking the lead from text-only games. The mouse as a PC device was a few years off. The mouse as a game device? Unheard of! It wasn't until King's Quest V that the text element was abandoned.

Quest of Gwydion

In this King's Quest, you played not as Graham, the knight and king of the first two King's



It was the Quest of times. A golden game that sucked us all in



Quests, but Gwydion, the slave of a powerful wizard. As Gwydion, you are compelled to break the shackles of oppression and find your destiny... To cut a long story short, you're the son of King Graham and you must return to Daventry, to free your royal family from the clutches of a dragon. To this end, you had to master powerful magic that allowed you to do all sorts of magical things: transform into animals, cause a storm, understand creatures and become invisible.

It was better than the first two for a number of reasons. It was a hell of a lot bigger. The graphics were about as impressive as it got and I'm pretty sure this was

the first time I saw a cut-scene (of sorts). The story was a little more involving than the get-the-money/get-the-girl of the previous games. You began as a young man, not knowing who you were and through the course of the game, discovered your identity. You were able to sail away on a pirate ship and it also offered the use of magic, which really was a lot better than it sounds. All this was quite innovative, considering how little the King's Quest games have really changed since 1983.

Put Quest to Rest

I lost interest after King's Quest VI, and the gaming public

pretty much joined me. The King's Quests didn't really compare to games like The Secret of Monkey Island. It would probably be mean to say that Sierra was a one trick pony, but all those quest games really looked and played very much alike. Anyway, in my mind's eye, King's Quest III will always be of the golden years, where high adventure was in the air and nothing mattered more than casting that spell before the wizard returned. King's Quest III: a delightful game for its time, but who could see how gaming would change in ten years? Not Roberta and Ken, I'll warrant.

John Dewhurst



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Harvey Norman, David Jones, Dick Smith Electronics, Myer/Grace Bros, Chandlers, Strathfield Car Radio, Software Today, Brisbane Sound, Archie Martin and Billy Guyatts stores.

*Hours must be used within 31 or 90 days depending on product selection.

System Requirements: Windows 95, Windows NT or later, 12Mb RAM Windows 95, 16Mb RAM Windows NT, 14.4K or faster modem, unused serial port and up to 70Mb free disk space (exact disk space usage is dependent upon installation selections).

MPX5133/PP

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